



GRENADA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

**SECOND SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

TUESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2024

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

**Table of Contents**

Attendance .....	3
Prayers.....	5
Minutes.....	5
Announcements .....	6
Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024 .....	7
Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024 .....	59
Bills: Passports (Amendment) Bill, 2024 .....	92
Adjournment.....	97

**Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's**

**Attendance**

**PRESENT**

Mr. Speaker

Honourable Leo Cato, MP

*in the Chair*

Honourable Dickon Mitchell, MP  
(*St. David*)

- Prime Minister & Minister for National Security, Home Affairs, Information, Disaster Management & Public Administration, Infrastructure and Physical Development, Public Utilities & Civil Aviation and Transportation

Honourable Philip A. Telesford, MP  
(*St. George South-East*)

- Minister for Health

Honourable Lennox John Andrews, MP  
(*St. Andrew South West*)

- Minister for Economic Development, Planning and Co-operatives, Agriculture & Lands, Forestry and Marine Resources

Honourable Tevin Andrews, MP  
(*Carriacou & Petite Martinique*)

- Ministry of Carriacou, Petite Martinique Affairs and Local Government

Honourable Dennis Cornwall, MP  
(*St. Patrick East*)

- Minister for Finance

Honourable Kerryne Z. James, MP  
(*St. John*)

- Minister for Climate Resilience, the Environment and Renewable Energy

Honourable Ron Livingston Redhead, MP  
(*St. George North-East*)

- Member

Honourable Delma Thomas, MP  
(*St. Andrew North-West*)

- Minister for Mental Health, Wellness, and Religious Affairs, with a special focus on the Mt. Gay Psychiatric Hospital

Honourable Andy Williams, MP  
(*St. George South*)

- Minister for Mobilisation, Implementation and Transformation

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith C. Mitchell, PC, MP, JP  
(*St. George North-West*)

- Leader of His Majesty's Opposition

Honourable. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP  
(*St. Mark*)

- Deputy Speaker

Honourable Peter David, MP  
(*Town of St. George*)

- Member

Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP  
(*St. Andrew South-East*)

- Member

**Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's**

**Attendance**

**ABSENT**

Honourable Joseph Andall, MP  
(*St. Patrick West*)

- Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade & Export  
Development  
(*Excused*)

Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters, MP  
(*St. Andrew North-East*)

- Member  
(*Excused*)

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Prayers  
Minutes***

***The Sitting of the House of Representatives began at 9:03 a.m.***

**Mr. Speaker:** Let's pray.

**(House Prayer was said)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Join me in the Lord's Prayer.

**(The Lord's Prayer was said)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Pray be seated.

**(Sound of gavel)**

**Mr. Speaker:** This Honourable House now commences.

**Deputy Clerk:** Item 3 – Oath of Allegiance or Affirmation of a new Member.  
Item 4 – Confirmation of Minutes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to everyone.

**Mr. Speaker:** Morning.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the House of Representatives, held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Tuesday, the 4th June, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. be taken as read.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Minutes  
Announcements***

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes taken as read.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the confirmation of the Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the House of Representatives, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Tuesday, 4th June 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes confirmed.**

**Deputy Clerk:** Item 5 – Messages from the Governor-General.

Item 6 – Announcements by Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** All right. Morning, Honourable Members. I am informed that Honourable Kate Lewis and Honourable Emmalin Pierre have functions to do at some graduations today and will be joining us late. I learned from Honourable Emmalin Pierre that she has to do the feature address. And I was just advised as well that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition will be late. He has some traffic challenges and, as such, will be joining us late.

I have in my possession correspondence from the Parliament of the Americas informing us that the Parliament of Grenada, in collaboration with the ParlAmericas, will be hosting a workshop here in Grenada on July 9. It is a half-day workshop from 9 a.m. to 12:30 pm., and it is geared for all present Parliamentarians.

On a very similar note, the Parliament of the Americas are holding a virtual

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Announcements***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

meeting on July 2, “Tying the Threads Together”. July 2 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., “Tying the Threads Together”. I would encourage all MPs, because this is for MPs. I find it to be very interesting. “Tying the Threads Together”. It's a virtual meeting. The link would be provided, and I encourage all MPs to log on and see what it is like. These are my announcements.

- Deputy Clerk:** Item 7 – Presentation of Petitions.  
Item 8 – Presentation of Papers and Reports from Select Communities.  
Item 9 – Unopposed Private Business.  
Item 10 – Questions.

**Mr. Speaker:** No. Go ahead.

- Deputy Clerk:** Item 11 – Urgent Questions under the provisions of Standing Order No. 20 (1) (Notice of Questions).  
Item 12 – Statement by Ministers.

**Mr. Speaker:** Proceed. I haven't seen anybody.

- Deputy Clerk:** Item 13 – Personal Explanations.  
Item 14 – Motions.  
Item 15 – Bills.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading for a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024. Thank you.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Leader of Government's Business.

**Question proposed.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill, the Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill of 2024, is probably the single most important Bill that this Government will pass for this year, as it relates to saving lives and protecting property, nationally. This Bill, Mr. Speaker, is geared towards curbing the proliferation of crime that has been raising its ugly head and showing its unpleasant face in Grenada, affecting our young men and women.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that this Parliament approved an amnesty, Firearms Amnesty, Mr. Speaker, which spans the period 1st of May, 2024, and which is due to expire at midnight on the 30th day of July, 2024. This Bill, which is being presented this morning, Mr. Speaker, will take up from where the amnesty ends. And so, it is seeking, Mr. Speaker, to implement stringent penalties for persons who find themselves on the other side of the law, in respect to the possession of firearms and ammunition.

Mr. Speaker, to give legal effect to the conditions which were laid down, Mr. Speaker, in the amnesty, this Bill seeks to amend sections 2, 4, 5, 9 to 17, 19 to 26, 35, 36, 41, 45 and 53 of the Firearms Act, Cap. 105, which is the principal Act.

Just by saying this alone, Mr. Speaker, you would recognise that sweeping changes had been made to the principal Act, all of which create firearm-related offences, save and except section 2 to increase the penalties in respect of the commission of each firearm-related offence.

Some of the offences will now include, Mr. Speaker, mandatory prison sentences and stringent fines. Stiffer penalties are also provided in cases where the prohibition of weapons, restricted weapons or restricted ammunition is used to commit specific offences under the principal Act.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, seeks also to amend section 20 of the principal Act, to create separate and specific offence of unlawful possession of firearm or ammunition by a person who was a holder of a licence, a certificate or permit issued under the Act, and in which case those certificates, licence or permit have either expired, lapsed or otherwise become invalid. The penalty for this separate offence is a fine of EC\$2,000 and imprisonment of six months.

Section 2 (2) of that section, Mr. Speaker, provides an exception where a person may have in his or her possession a firearm or ammunition for the purpose of surrendering that firearm or ammunition on behalf of another person during the amnesty period. And subsection (3) sets out the specific circumstances under which a person will be deemed to be in possession of a firearm or ammunition, for the purpose of the offence under this section.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Bill contains some 28 clauses. I will seek to sort of summarise, but Clause 1, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the short title and also the effective date on which this Bill becomes effective. The effective date, Mr. Speaker, will be July 30, 2024, immediately on the expiration of the amnesty. So this Bill, Mr. Speaker, will kick in immediately after the Bill's expiration. Excuse me.

Clause 2, Mr. Speaker, seeks to provide for the application of the Act to legal proceedings instituted on or after the date of its commencement.

Clause 3 speaks to a new definition of the term "imitation firearm".

Clause 4, Mr. Speaker, seeks to amend section 4 of the principal Act to increase the penalties for the offence of unlawful importation, exportation or trans-shipment of firearms and ammunition.

Clause 5, Mr. Speaker, amends section 5 of the principal Act to increase the penalty of the offence of failing to make a declaration of firearms and ammunition, or making a false declaration to a fine of some EC\$50,000 and to imprisonment for a period of one year.

Clause 6, Mr. Speaker, amends section 9 of the principal Act and again seeks to increase the penalty for the offence of manufacturing or dealing in firearms, ammunition

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

or prohibited weapons, except in accordance with the terms of a firearm manufacture licence, of firearm dealer license.

Clause 7, Mr. Speaker... Excuse me.. Treat with section... sorry. Treat with section 10 of the principal Act, again increasing the penalty, Mr. Speaker, for the offence of unlawful acquisition or disposal of firearms and ammunition to imprisonment for a period not less than 10 years and not more than 20 years on summary conviction; and to imprisonment for not less than 15 years and not more than 40 years on conviction on indictment.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Bill underscores the seriousness of the possession of these illegal weapons and the proliferation of crime. This Bill seeks to dissuade people, especially our young men and youths, from possessing illegal firearms. Mr. Speaker, these weapons are meant to kill, and we need every single Grenadian to be alive and to contribute to national development. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, this Bill becomes so critical at this point in time, having recognised that it appears to us that there is a new trend in which our young men, in particular, feel that the only way of protecting themselves is to have an illegal weapon.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we move to clause 8. Again, you would recognise, Mr. Speaker, the seriousness of this Bill because clause 8 amends section 11 of the principal Act, which speaks to unlawful delivery of a firearm and ammunition. Anyone doing that, Mr. Speaker, illegally delivering a firearm will be subject to a fine of EC\$50,000 and to imprisonment for a period of one year, unless the accused can actually prove that at the time of the delivery, he or she was unaware that they were in contravention of this Act. And I don't know how easy that will be to prove, Mr. Speaker.

Clause 9, again, amends the principal Act. It speaks to the offence of manufacturing and dealing in firearms or ammunition, elsewhere or other than in that place specified to be a licensed place, a place where a licensed dealer or a licensed manufacturer operates from, again, and attracting stiff penalties.

Clause 10, Mr. Speaker, speaks to undertaking repairs of these illegal weapons. One ought not to be fondling with, playing with, repairing or fixing in local parlance,

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

Mr. Speaker, these illegal weapons. If you're found in possession of these weapons, whether they are functional, properly functional or whether as we say in local terms "they spoil and they are not good", whatever the case is, Mr. Speaker, if you're found in possession of these weapons, you are going to be so penalised by law.

Clause 11, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the offence of accepting the delivery of the weapon. A fine, Mr. Speaker, of sum EC\$50,000 or imprisonment, and to imprisonment, Mr. Speaker, not or, and to imprisonment for a period of one year.

Clause 12, Mr. Speaker, again, amending the principal Act to increase the penalty for the offence of converting into a prohibited weapon, anything which is not a prohibited weapon, to imprisonment for a period of five years. So if you're found trying to convert something else into this weapon, again, Mr. Speaker, same penalty. The same penalty applies. This Bill, Mr. Speaker, is saying to the general public that a life of crime is not a path to walk.

We encourage our young men and women to find useful, beneficial careers, trades, learn a skill, do something with their hands, and utilise their brains for good and beneficial purposes, which will contribute to national development and a better life.

Because you see, Mr. Speaker, when our youths get hooked up with crime, and they get involved in this thing, it is difficult, first and foremost, to come out of it. And secondly, these weapons end the lives of our young people prematurely. There are no second chances with this thing.

So, we have to ensure, Mr. Speaker, as a responsible Government, that we do all in our power to protect every single citizen. We cannot sit back and say, well, let them kill each other. These are our children, our sons and our daughters. These are our brothers. Yes, Mr. Speaker, our brothers and sisters.

So, Mr. Speaker, clause 13, and I believe, Mr. Speaker, I got a little chuckle from the "Other Side". Well you know, Mr. Speaker, this Bill will actually create some employment, you know, a little bit of business is going to come out from this, because those who did not surrender and seek to use or even found with or try to repair, as long as they are found with this weapon, Mr. Speaker, they will find themselves having to pay

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

hefty fines. And so, they would need proper representation. And, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that there is proper representation to be obtained. **(Inaudible comment by a Member) (Laughter)** Mr. Speaker, the failing to display... Clause 13, I think, I need to... So, Mr. Speaker, clause 13 seeks to amend section 16 of the principal Act to increase the penalty for the offence of failing to display a notice of licence. You know we're smart Grenadians, Mr. Speaker, we'll say well, I mean I have the licence, I'm licensed and expect the officer to walk away. But, Mr. Speaker, there's also an offence if you fail to display your licence, or if you're licensed to trade or licensed to repair or fix firearms, you must display that licence properly. Yes? And so, failing to display such a licence would attract a penalty of a sum of EC\$3,000 and imprisonment for a period of one month. This is serious, Mr. Speaker.

Clause 14 seeks to amend section 17 of the principal Act, to increase the penalty for the offence of failing to keep a register of transactions, unknowingly making a false entry into the register, to a fine of EC\$50,000 and to imprisonment for one year.

So, Mr. Speaker, for us to understand this, clause 14, Mr. Speaker, if you're trading, repairing or otherwise licensed to treat with these firearms, in that way, one must keep a proper register of not some, but all transactions, and it must be truthful information. So when the inspectorate reviews what has been happening, they can have proper information on which to make their decision.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important for us to construct an orderly, decent and crime-free society. Grenada within the OECS region has been known to be one of the most peaceful, safe and secure countries within this region, and we must keep it so. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we have so many visitors on an annual basis coming to our shores. That is why we have so many yachts plying these parts.

The average citizen, Mr. Speaker, if they forget to lock their house lock, doesn't necessarily have to race back home to lock up, or their vehicle for that matter, because by and large, Grenada is still very safe. And by and large, free from some of these dangerous crimes. **(Applause)** Thank you. I need a little of that sometimes, you know. **(Laughter)**

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

So, Mr. Speaker... **(Laughter)** Mr. Speaker, it is important for us, if we have to transition from this, from where we are, into this wonderful, prosperous nation, we cannot do so when we fear for our lives. Investors must be free to come in and invest. Our local people must be free to invest without the fear of a sudden knock on the door. We don't want to get to a state where our citizens are being kidnapped and ransom has to be paid, and all of these things. We do not want to get to a state, Mr. Speaker, where our police force is afraid to go into certain sections of this country.

And that is why, Mr. Speaker, this Bill by itself, we recognise that just passing a Bill cannot solve the problem. But this, Mr. Speaker, lines up with a number of initiatives being taken by the police force and the Minister for National Security, who is our Prime Minister, to secure our country. And, Mr. Speaker, I am certain that he will speak to some of these when he comes, so I don't want to steal his thunder.

Mr. Speaker, clause 15 amends section 19 of the principal Act to increase the penalty for the offence of taking in a pawn shop or ammunition, firearm, or ammunition to a fine of EC\$50,000. So, Mr. Speaker, those who want to trade in these illegal weapons, arms and ammunition should first have a security deposit of EC\$50,000, because when they're caught, that is what they have to pay. And I know this is not a little bit of money.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm saying this because this Bill is serious, because the ending of the lives of our citizens is serious when we recognise that our young men are killing each other and ending up in jail. One calypsonian, some years ago, said in a song to the effect of, "The grave, the jail and the hospital". I can't remember if it was.... Tallpre. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** Three things he's not afraid of.... Well, thank you for... I'm not too good with that side of life, but three things he's not afraid of are the grave, the jail and the hospital. So I'm told this morning. And we'll add another one, seemingly firearms.

Look at what happens, Mr. Speaker. If our young men really adopt this, not afraid of the grave, ending one's life, the jail, and the hospital and firearms, let us ponder on this. Where are we going to end up? Where are our young men going to

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

end up? We are going to have a society with a significant deficit in our male population. We cannot afford for our sons and our daughters to end up like this.

So, Mr. Speaker, clause 16, moving on, seeks to amend section 20 of the principal Act to create a separate offence of unlawful possession of a firearm or ammunition, by a person who was the holder of a licence, certificate or a permit issued under the Act which has since expired, lapsed or otherwise become invalid at the time of the possession of that illegal weapon. The penalty for which is a fine of EC\$3,000 and imprisonment for six months.

And, Mr. Speaker, one would understand the seriousness of this. These licences, when obtained, you must monitor and ensure that they are properly reinstated, renewed or become valid again. Like paying your monthly or, I guess, annual fees and ensuring that you are in good standing. All right?

Subsection (b) of that clause, speaks to the increase in penalty for the offence of unlawful possession of a firearm or ammunition to imprisonment for not less than 10 years and not more than 20 years on summary conviction, and to imprisonment for not less than 20 years and not more than 40 years on conviction on indictment.

Subsection (c) provides an exception where a person may have in his or her possession a firearm or ammunition for the purpose of surrendering that firearm or ammunition on behalf of another person, during a firearm amnesty declared pursuant to section 51A of the Act. So when an amnesty is issued by the Government, when that happens, they can get an exemption for such purposes. Again important.

Subsection (d) sets out the specific circumstances under which a person will be deemed to be in possession of a firearm or ammunition for the purposes of an offence under this section.

Clause 17, Mr. Speaker, amends section 21 of the principal Act, to increase the penalty for the offence of contravening the general restriction upon carrying firearms and ammunition in a public place to a fine of not less than EC\$50,000 and not more than EC\$100,000 and to imprisonment for not less than five years and not more and 10 years. So this one deals with contravening the Act, in respect of carrying a firearm in a

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

public place.

Clause 18, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the offence of contravening a special restriction upon carrying firearms and ammunition in a public place to a fine of not less than EC\$50,000 and not more than EC\$100,000 and to imprisonment for not less than five years and not more than 10 years on summary conviction; and to a fine of not less than EC\$100,000 not more than EC\$250,000 and to imprisonment for not less than 10 years and not more than 20 years on conviction on indictments.

Clause 19. Clause 19, Mr. Speaker, treats with the discharging of a firearm in a public place. The offence of discharging a firearm in a public place. And, Mr. Speaker, within a distance of 40 yards of any public road or in any public place, 40 yards. And the fine again, Mr. Speaker, EC\$50,000.

Clause 20. Clause 20 speaks to the offence of possessing a firearm or ammunition with the intent to injure. And this speaks to imprisonment for not less than 10 years and not more than 20 years.

Clause 21. Clause 21, Mr. Speaker, seeks to amend section 25 of the principal Act to increase the penalty for the offence of—

(a) Possession with intent to commit or to aid the commission of an indictable offence or to resist or prevent the lawful apprehension or detention of a person to imprisonment for not less than 15 years, not more than 40 years on conviction on indictment.

Again, Mr. Speaker, very, very important.

(b) Possession of a firearm or ammunition belonging to the Government is punishable by imprisonment for not less than five years and not more than 10 years on summary conviction and by imprisonment for not less than 10 years and not more than 20 years.

Clause 22, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the offence of using a firearm or ammunition in contravention of the terms and conditions of a license, certificate or permit as issued under this Act.

Clause 23 speaks to the offence of failing without a lawful excuse to comply with

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

a notice under section 35, to a fine of EC\$3,000 or imprisonment for six months.

Clause 24 speaks to the offence of failing without a lawful excuse to comply with a notice.

Clause 25, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the offence of failing to report the loss of a firearm or ammunition. A fine, again, Mr. Speaker, EC\$50,000.

Clause 26 speaks to the offence of failing to stop a vehicle at the request of a police officer, preventing or intimidating the driver of such a vehicle from stopping or escaping or attempting to escape from such a vehicle, to a fine of not less than EC\$50,000. Again, Mr. Speaker, this particular clause, clause 26, is very important and very instrumental in the reduction of these firearms.

Clause 27 speaks to the offence; I'm going to finish shortly. Thanks for... Yes. The offence of failing to comply with the requirements pertaining to the custody of a firearm and ammunition.

Clause 28, Mr. Speaker, amend section 53 of the principal Act to increase the general penalties for all offences under the Act.

Mr. Speaker, I took the time to go through these clauses within 29 minutes. I have one more minute to say, because I want the general public and especially our young man who trading these weapons, to understand the serious implications of passing this Bill here today, and the reason why they should surrender these weapons, utilise the balance of this amnesty that is remaining and turn away from a life of crime.

**(Applause)**

I want to say in this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, that if you're hooked on crime, there is help. You can walk into the Ministry of Social and Community Development at the Botanical Gardens. There are many counsellors there who can speak to you in confidence. Walk into the Ministry of Youth, speak to the technocrats in the ministry and come up with something that is, and they will help you to come up with something that is viable and useful as a career, and turn away from a life of crime.

Mr. Speaker, with the last few remaining seconds, I want to say to our young men in particular, every single one of us who sit at this table, every young man who sits

**Sitting of the House of Representatives**  
**Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024**  
**At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's**

**Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024**

here, I'm not young again, used to be, had a choice, every single one of them, has a choice to either turn to something that is useful and beneficial to the country or a life of crime. They had a choice. They choose to make a valuable contribution to nation-building.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to end by calling on our young men, please put down your weapons, turn away from crime, there is help at the ministry. There is help in the church. Turn away, walk into the church, and walk into people who can help you. I am willing to help you. We are willing to help you. And I make the solemn call because, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to see our young man in prison.

The prison is already overpopulated. **(Sound of Time Bell)** I don't want to see that. We don't want to see that. We want our young men to contribute to nation-building. Thank you. **(Applause)** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much, Leader of Government's Business. And I see MP for St. Andrew North West.

**Hon. Delma Thomas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pleasant good morning to everyone. Mr. Speaker, I rise to lend my voice in support of the Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024. Mr. Speaker, by introducing stricter penalties for a wide range of firearm-related offences, the Bill seeks to deter illegal possession, trafficking and use of firearms.

Mr. Speaker, the mandatory minimum sentence for various offences, particularly the harsher penalties for automatic firearms, underscores the Government's commitment to curbing the proliferation of dangerous weapons and addressing the severe impact of gun violence in our communities. These amendments aim to create a strong legal framework, not only to punish offenders but also to serve as a robust deterrent against future violations.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment is anticipated to have a significant positive impact on mental health within the Grenadian community. By reducing the prevalence of illegal

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

firearms and imposing stringent penalties on offenders, the Bill aims to create a safer and more secure environment. Mr. Speaker, the reduction in gun-related violence and crime will likely lead to decreased levels of fear, anxiety and trauma among our citizens, fostering a sense of well-being and stability.

Mr. Speaker, when communities feel safer, individuals are less likely to experience the chronic stress and mental health issues associated with living in high-crime areas. This initiative not only helps to remove potential threats but also promotes a culture of responsibility and peace. As a result, the overall reduction in firearm availability and the associated decrease in violence incidents are expected to contribute positively to the mental health and quality of life of all Grenadians. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this amendment. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable MP for St. Andrew North West. MP for St. George North East.

**Hon. Ron. Redhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise to make my contribution on what I believe is a historical series of amendments to the Firearms Bill. Act... Sorry. And I want to start off by giving some sort of introduction to this matter.

And to also commend the hard-working members of the Royal Grenada Police Service **(applause)**, who I like to call, who sacrifice on a daily basis, their freedom and safety for the entire country. A sacrifice, Mr. Speaker, that many of us will refuse to make, but one that is absolutely necessary to preserve the peace and stability of our nation.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding this tremendous sacrifice by our men and women in the service, those people who attempt to vilify and criticise and say that RGPF is compromised seem to be very loud these days. But, Mr. Speaker, we ought to pause for a moment and ask some simple questions, like, what did they do to enhance the force? What did they do to help them fight crime? What did they ever do to find

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

solutions to the problems of illegal firearms on the streets of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique? What did they do?

And the answer, I believe, is slim. That is why this rhetoric, Mr. Speaker, of hatred towards our senior officers and the Department of National Security is dangerous, as it presents only the voice of old talk, and will never represent the voice of the people of Grenada. **(Applause)** Because we believe as genuine Grenadians, while it is necessary to critique, and sometimes it is, in times of danger, it is most necessary to act and to do something and respond with a solution to the situation.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the Government of Grenada for acting in this regard. **(Applause)** We must therefore seek to do our part as legislators, and that's why we are here today. So, by passing this series of amendments, the Grenada Bar Association is now on board with, and as said in some instances, it is a long time coming. It is important to amend these sections. And I could reference, a longstanding criminal Attorney at Law, Mr. Anslem Clouden, for example, for lending his voice to, well, in support of these amendments.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments essentially will increase the penalties associated with the use of illegal guns and aim to reduce them altogether. Yes, Mr. Speaker, just please, if I could just get some quiet, please.

Mr. Speaker, essentially as I said, the amendments will increase the penalties associated with the use of illegal guns, and aim to reduce altogether the proliferation of illegal guns on the streets of Grenada. And this move comes following the Government's recent initiative through the Parliament to pass the gun amnesty.

Again, by all indications, we have said that success for us is that, at least, even if one illegal gun is off the streets, then we are satisfied. And so far, the results suggest that at least one has been removed, and then, in operations by the RGPF, others have been confiscated to make Grenada a more peaceful environment. **(Applause)**

So, essentially, clauses 4 to 28 deal with the increases in the penalties for the corresponding offences in each section. The issue, Mr. Speaker, for example, that I know some may raise this morning, of bail. It is clear, certainly from the legal drafters'

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

side, that bail or this issue of not permitting bail does not violate the doctrine of the separation of powers. In other words, Mr. Speaker, we are not the judiciary; we are the legislators. What we are doing is only passing a law, and therefore, it is the judiciary that determines and applies the law as necessary. So that is not our role, as mentioned before.

Because the judiciary, Mr. Speaker, still retains ample discretion over the proceedings in a court. We do not have that jurisdiction, and therefore, where we sit, it is to deter, as you heard mentioned by the Leader of Government's Business, the proliferation of illegal guns on the streets of Grenada. So with these few words, I want to say that I fully support this, this series of amendments, and I'm prepared to go all out to ensure that it is passed.

Just picking up from one of the Members on the "Other Side", previous comments, in one of the other Sittings, where he said that this essentially is a white collar crime. I believe that he should be supporting these amendments and should be rising to say, Mr. Speaker, through you that now we could begin to deal with such a white collar crime in our society, to ensure that the peace in Grenada and the stability that we enjoy, is never threatened by those externally, but we will do all part to ensure that we preserve that peace as legislators and as other leaders in our society. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for St. George North East. MP for St. Patrick's East.

**Hon. Dennis Cornwall:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give my full support to the Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024, against the backdrop that I think it's time, or the time has arrived, that we should adopt a zero tolerance policy where illegal firearm proliferation is concerned. We need to send a strong message to our misguided youths out there, who believe that trading in drugs and ammunition as a business, to be assured that this government will not tolerate this behaviour.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

I also want to basically send a strong message to those non-nationals who also believe that they can come into our borders and trade illegal firearms—that we will not tolerate that. Mr. Speaker, we have seen in recent months a rise in those activities, illicit killings of our young men in our country, and I think it's time that we put a stop to all of this. I am not saying that increasing the fines and jail time will solve the problem.

Some may argue that it would increase the population in the prison, which is already high, but I believe, Mr. Speaker, even if we have to build more prison space, to deal with those who believe that they can get away with anything that they do illegally, and make a living out of it, we want to send that message that this is not permitted. Zero tolerance throughout, where these are concerned.

So, Mr. Speaker, as said again, I would like to lend my full support to this amendment to the Firearms (No. 2) Bill of 2024. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for St. Patrick East. And I think it's the light of the MP for St. Andrew South-West.

**Hon. Lennox Andrews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And a very pleasant good morning to all. I see the Prime Minister's father is here with us. Good morning. Mr. Speaker, I stand to give support to the Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill of 2024.

I'm doing so on the basis of objective data available on weapon offences in our country, and of the need therefore to put rigid, pragmatic measures in place to ensure that our country, our homeland and our people are safe not just for ourselves, but for those who come to our shores. Mr. Speaker, I want to present to you some information, some hard data on weapon offences in this country, as far back as 2018 up to 2022.

And, Mr. Speaker, the data is showing that reported cases of possession of firearms, in 2018 were 21, in 2019—13, in 2020—17, in 2021—25, in 2022—34. So it has been increasing.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, reported cases of possession of ammunition in 2018 were 26, in 2019—15, in 2020—22, in 2021—26, in 2022—33. Again, over a five-year

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

period, the numbers show that the offences have been increasing.

And Mr. Speaker, this one, reported cases of persons armed with a weapon in 2018—127, in 2019—246, in 2020—333, in 2021—396, in 2022—460.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, the objective conditions for the presentation of this Bill here today are clear. And what it means is that the conditions for crime in this country are obvious, and hence the need for us to take measures to ensure that crime is reduced in our dear Island.

Mr. Speaker, there have been many theories and many studies on the relationship between crime and growth and the economic development of a country. A recent study, Mr. Speaker, by the Inter-American Development Bank on the crime situation in 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, revealed that the average cost of crime amounted to 3.6% of the country's GDP, so crime is, in fact, costly.

So what, in fact, is being said here is that crime is often considered an impediment to our country's economic development and growth, and it's an impediment, Mr. Speaker, because it increases economic uncertainty. Crime discourages long-term development and new employment opportunities, which are very important for our young people and for the country. Of course, crime can erode and undermine the law of the land, and because of this, Mr. Speaker, many countries have put in place and developed comprehensive strategies aimed at crime prevention and crime reduction.

And what we doing today, Mr. Speaker, is simply one such strategy. Other strategies, Mr. Speaker, focus on the education of our youth. Letting our youths see the value that exists in themselves, providing them with useful opportunities where they can channel their youthful energies in productive economic activities.

This strategy seeks to ensure that development does not only take place with one set of people and that development must be spread throughout the island, so that people don't become marginalised because there is the view that marginalised people, those who haven't benefit or those who are not benefiting from the economic development, can, in fact, get involved in criminal activities.

And so, Mr. Speaker, what this Bill or Amendment seeks to do is to create a

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

society, a nation that values human life, that values human dignity, that values work; work, Mr. Speaker, as the source of earned income. That makes us understand that as a people, our living standard depends on what we can do to help ourselves and that we must work and produce the goods and services that we consume, but also have enough to pay for the goods and services that we don't produce but we consume.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I give full support to this Bill, as others before me said, the contemporary situation in our country, where our young men, our young productive men, are giving their lives away, killing themselves. We have to address that situation. We have to put control on that situation, and therefore, as a Government that cares for our people, who cares for our young people, this Bill is geared towards ensuring that our young people find useful avenues to unleash their creative ability, to unleash their energy and to contribute meaningfully to the social and economic transformation of our homeland, Grenada, and its people. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for St. Andrew South West. Honourable... No. All right, I sense the debate is just about completed.

**Hon. Peter David:** You wanted me to speak, Mr. Speaker? **(Inaudible comment)** If you want me to speak, Mr. Speaker. I oblige you.

**Mr. Speaker:** MP for the Town of St. George.

**Hon. Peter David:** I oblige the Government. I was listening, Mr. Speaker, quite intently because, quite frankly, I was unclear about what we were speaking of. The issue is crime... All we are doing here today is discussing a change in gun crime, but the proliferation of gun crime is only one aspect of the proliferation of crime. Legislation aimed at dealing with guns is not going to solve the problem of crime in our society. **(Applause)** That's not going to solve the problem. I know the Government has other things it would like to address.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

I want to commend, quite frankly, the approach which looks at gun crime, but first of all, let me start by saying this. Let's not make this a political issue because crime knows no politics. Crime knows no colour. **(Applause)** So my young brother from St. George North East, stop going back and saying what you did, what you did. That has no place in this issue of crime.

And the issue of mandatory minimums is not new. Don't make it sound like you're doing something new. If you look at the legislation, there have always been mandatory minimums for gun crime, but the truth is, it hasn't been applied, and there's a reason why it hasn't been applied. Because it seems to be removing the discretion from judges and magistrates who are on the frontline. You are not on the frontline. Don't make it appear that you are on the front line. You are not. The frontline in the battle against crime does not rest in the Parliament. I agree with us looking at the issue of gun crime, but let me say this. You know what I worry about? Your approach.

You received a letter, and my young brother from St. George North East, you mentioned that the Bar Association is on board, but let me tell you this. The Bar Association wrote a letter to you dated 31st May 2024, in which it pointed out to you, the Government, through your Attorney General or if your Attorney General is not communicating with you, then don't blame me, don't blame the Bar Association.

In that letter, it raised the issue and listen, please, please, one good quality about politicians is to listen, you do not know everything, listen. The letter was written indicating that they would like to have discussions with you, discussions on both the issue of mandatory minimums and on the issue of the removal of the discretion of the magistrate on the issue of bail. The letter was written, a long letter from the Bar Association, signed by the President of the Bar. I have copies of the letter if she has not passed it to you, I would certainly give you a copy.

What did you do? And when I say you, I mean you through your Attorney General. You responded. You responded to the Bar Association by saying, "Listen, man, this idea that you all have that mandatory minimums are unconstitutional and that discretion of the magistrate is unconstitutional. This idea you lawyers have, we know

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

better". Therefore, at the end of her letter, she says, "We are going to proceed". We will proceed without any consultation with those on the frontline of the issue of crime.

Now you, my young brother from St. George North East, said the Bar Association is on board. No, no, no, no. I know the Bar Association will get attacked, so you know me, as a criminal defence lawyer, I will be attacked. I represent ordinary working people who find themselves afoul of crime every single day, and I make no apologies.

The point I'm making is this. Are you so arrogant as to believe you do not need to consult with the Bar Association on the issue of whether or not these things are constitutional or not? Is there such arrogance in you that you don't want to see it? And look, you're doing it again. Look, you're doing it again. No. I'm not debating the Bill because I only have 15 minutes.

I am saying to you that the place you go to have consultation, and it may sound funny to you, is the Bar Association, which has in its ranks the highest-ranking judicial officers, Francis Alexis, King's Council, Ruggles Ferguson. You are saying to them, "Come to the Parliament and debate the Bill"?

My brothers and sisters, I know, I know, I know I will be subject to attack. I say to you let us... **(Inaudible comment by Members)** Mr. Speaker, are they speaking through you? I hope my time... Tell me when you're ready, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, you go ahead, you proceed. I have not intervened. You proceed.

**Hon. Peter David:** So you're not going to comment on the...

**Mr. Speaker:** Proceed, Honourable MP, please.

**Hon. Peter David:** I will proceed. The point I'm making is this, please, let not your arrogance lead you to ignoring the senior members of the Bar who are urging you to have a consultation before you take this to the final stages. Your Attorney General

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

indicated that they're not unconstitutional, senior councils believe they are. I cannot sit here this morning in ten minutes and go through all the legal arguments about constitutionality or not. All I can do is this, my young brothers, is invite you to come to Court one day. Come to Court on the last Thursday of every month, where you see mothers, brothers, sisters, and uncles on both sides of the crime. Where you see Probation Officers, where you see Magistrates, where you see people working to help you. That is where our crime begins, when our young people are juveniles.

I say this to you. The truth is, you're right, the police are doing an excellent job. In fact, Grenada has one of the highest rates of solving crime throughout the Caribbean **(applause)** and let us commend the police for that. What they need is not more guns. I noticed recently there's a story that we're getting more high-powered guns. Let me tell you the story of Trinidad and Tobago.

You're putting more guns into the circulation of the country? High-powered guns, in Trinidad and Tobago, years ago, you may be too young to remember Dole Chadee. When Dole Chadee had his criminal ring, the Government decided to solve the crime; you know how they will solve the crime? "We will hang Dole Chadee and all his friends." So they hung about five or six of them. The next day, 10 people were killed in Trinidad. There were armed police, and where is Trinidad today? Please just listen. You're not listening. I'm saying that in Trinidad, they went down the same path, more weapons, harsher sentences, and the crime has continued to increase in Trinidad and Tobago.

I'm saying this to say, my brothers and sisters, there are root causes of crime. There are root causes of crime, and all of us must come together to solve these root causes. What is the Bar Association doing? The Bar Association has invited you to discuss these root causes. The Bar Association has said we have a committee that includes the priests, that includes the private sector, that includes the labour movement, that includes people who act as magistrates. Let us sit together with all of these people to discuss what the fundamental underlying roots of crime are, not just passing legislation to hang people for crime, but to find out why there is an increase. Why is it

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

that young people are more prone to committing crime now? Why? And we have extensive discussions every week on this issue, magistrates.

I have been before magistrates who are working hell hard to find solutions. I've seen young people aged 15 and 16 packing up the juvenile centre. We must address these. I know the Government has programmes for that. I know that. I know the Government will try, but I'm saying to you that you should have extensive consultations. The Bar Association is only offering itself as one of the avenues to go.

Our magistrates are socially conscious. Our magistrates live among the people. Our magistrates are grounded here. They have a stake here. I know we have legislation coming shortly to deal with disenfranchisement and certain bail issues, but our magistrates work hard every single day to the extent that we work with the magistrates to solve crime. The point I'm making, brothers and sisters, is that our magistrates are also on the frontline.

I commend the Prime Minister for talking about the situation at the prison. The prison is an incubator for crime. I commend it because we have to deal with the issue. But let me tell you again, like in the US, the solution to crime is not just building more prisons. So crime goes up, you build more prisons. It goes up, you build more, you end up like America, and you'll have a prison industrial complex. Soon, you might be talking about privatising the prison like they've done in the US. No. We must solve the problems so that the prison becomes the last resort for people to go to.

Brothers and sisters, Members of Parliament, you have admitted, several of you have admitted that these pieces of legislation will not solve crime. Look at the frontline workers, are we investing more in the probation department? Are we investing more in programmes for youth in the communities? We talk about what happened before. My colleagues, there were programmes. There were programmes—the MPower Programme. All of these programs were aimed at that.

I notice my brother from the South West stopped with the statistics for crime in 2021. It has increased since you've been sitting there. It has, but you refuse to go with those statistics. I like that you stop somewhere in 2021. Well, that's fine, I understand

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

politics. I've been around long enough to know you don't want to show that crime and gun crime in particular have increased over the last two years.

Who do you blame for that, yourselves? Is it your policies? Since you're blaming "This Side" for what took place before, why don't you accept responsibility that gun crime has increased over the last two years? Well, accept it. Say it. Don't make it political. Gun crime has been increasing over the last three years. I see it. So let us not treat this as politics, and you keep doing it, let us not treat... We all have to come together, and that is what the Bar Association is saying. Well, the Bar Association is not a political tool of anybody.

Mr. Speaker, there's another Bill coming and I will say more at that point, but in this case, these mandatory minimums, it is my view, without going into the details of the law, and we may get an exposition of the law, there will be an argument that it is not. We believe that it is not within the Constitution to remove the discretion.

Let me give you an example, Mr. Speaker. So there's a priest living in a house, and he has a gentleman living with him. The gentleman comes home one evening with a gun, and the priest sees the gun. The priest stashes it away to keep it away from the gentleman. So the priest takes possession of the gun. He took possession of it, but he does not know what to do. This is not a joke, my young brother.

The priest takes possession of the gun... And I have cases like this. The priest doesn't know what to do with it, so he hides it. So the priest has possession, and the priest has knowledge. Are you saying to me that a magistrate in that case or a judge should not be able to exercise discretion to say that he gives him probation or gives him some other sentence, in fact, he goes straight to jail for 10 years? **(Inaudible comments by Members)** Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, MPs. MPs allow him to proceed.

**Hon. Peter David:** Mandatory minimums are mandatory minimums. I have a case recently where a child and the mother were picked up because the police were

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

afraid that the man who owned the guns would say it belonged to them, and they would go to jail. I'm simply saying that mandatory minimums have been found to be unconstitutional in some jurisdictions. I'm not saying that the Bill does not provide some escape routes, but I'm saying this. Mr. Speaker, a lot of lawyers on the "Other Side", who would make their arguments in a while, and I know my friend, while he does not practice criminal law, I know he would have been properly briefed on it, so he will have a response. The point I'm making, Mr. Speaker, is that the case of mandatory minimums needs to be discussed, and while it is open to all kinds of interpretation, it is something that the Bar Association is calling for.

Mr. Speaker, but let me just say this in conclusion. I have one more minute left. I know that criminal defence lawyers are treated in a particular way. They seem to say of us that we are complicit in crime, but I'll tell you this. When their children or their constituents get locked up for small crimes, they call us. We don't represent big corporations. I have not done that, and they commit multiple crimes too, like tax evasion and so on. My crimes are small crimes I do represent, but we are on the frontline of dealing with this issue. We are partners with the Government, don't treat us as if we come here to cry for criminals. We come here as persons who want to uphold the law and who believe that working people and poor people have the same rights as big corporations when it comes to the law. So don't launch an attack on me and say "Boy, Peter is always talking about criminals", I do criminal defence as does a certain section of the Bar.

In fact, if you need to read the proposal, come along with the CARICOM initiative in need of declaration, they are saying that the Government should provide a legal aid system, to provide legal assistance for people who cannot afford it. In our system, it is a group of about four or five of us who provide that legal representation (**sound of bell**) for the poor people who can't afford it. So don't use today to attack and say Peter is always defending criminals. Yes, I do. I defend persons who run afoul of criminal law. I know I don't represent those who run afoul of corporate law and tax law, which is not my forte. My forte is the ordinary working people who are innocent. Much obliged.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

**(Applause).**

**Mr. Speaker:** I am seeing two lights on. Why is that light... **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** Okay. MP for the constituency of St. John.

**Hon. Kerryne James:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, everyone. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Firearms (Amendment) Bill, 2024. This legislative action is a clarion call from all citizens for decisive measures to curb what seems to be a slow-creeping, escalating tide of gun violence—a scourge that has deeply affected families, friends and members of my constituency and our nation at large. Mr. Speaker, the urgency of this Bill cannot be overstated.

In recent times, some of our communities have been marred by the echoes of gunshots, with innocent lives being disrupted or cut short. This is not just a statistic, Mr. Speaker. It is a devastating loss that reverberates through our community, highlighting the critical need for the stringent measures proposed in this Bill. By significantly enhancing penalties as seen in the increase from five to 15 to 40 years for serious firearm offences, this Bill aligns with successful regional precedents, Mr. Speaker, where similar legislations have led to a notable decline in gun-related crimes, demonstrating, Mr. Speaker, that stringent penalties can indeed serve as a powerful deterrent against the proliferation of illegal firearms. **(Applause)**

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, this Bill seeks to tighten bail conditions for firearm offences, ensuring that those charged under the Firearms Act with offences punishable by extensive imprisonment are not granted bail. This part of the amendment, Mr. Speaker, is something that I am very passionate about.

Mr. Speaker, I am passionate because this measure is crucial for preventing, re-offending and ensuring the integrity of our judicial process, much like the successful modules observed in Barbados and the Bahamas, where strict bail conditions have contributed to more controlled handling of gun-related cases. And Mr. Speaker, if I am to play devil's advocate based on the sentiments that were expressed by my colleague

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

Member, through you, on the opposite side. The word on the street is, Mr. Speaker, that had it not been for bail not being granted for some of our victims of gun-related crimes in the past weeks, most of them might have been alive today. **(Applause)**

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, the introduction of a specific offence of possessing firearms or ammunition under an expired licence addresses a critical loophole that has long needed closure. This is a proactive approach, Mr. Speaker, similar to one that was recently adopted by St. Lucia, where tighter controls on firearm licences have led to improved compliance and safety in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, the evidence is clear across the Caribbean, when robust firearm regulations are enacted and rigorously enforced, they lead to safer, more secure societies. The Firearm (Amendment) Bill, Mr. Speaker, is not merely a regulatory update. It is a vital component of a broader strategy to restore peace and order in our communities.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, in addressing the critical issues laid before this Honourable House, it is vital to approach every legislative measure with clarity and precision in understanding. It was remarked by the Member of the Opposition, through you, Mr. Speaker, and I quote, "Legislation that deals with gun violence cannot solve the issues of crimes", and so, Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate my colleagues attempt to engage with this serious matter, whether I quote verbatim or I make reference to what you said in a nutshell, it doesn't matter.

It is crucial to correct a fundamental misrepresentation of intent and scope of the Firearms (Amendment) Bill, 2024. And so, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues who have so on several occasions and time and time again claimed to say that we are young and we don't know what was and what is, and they know so much, that they take the time to read the Bill, and I would agree with them.

I would agree with the Members on the "Other Side" that we cannot politicise the issue of gun violence or crime in general, and so to come and stand in this Honourable House and misrepresent what this Amendment is trying to fulfil, I think that they should be pointed out for that, Mr. Speaker, and to rectify that. So I encourage my colleagues

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

on the “Other Side” to read the Bill before you make interventions in this House. **(Applause)**.

Mr. Speaker, to adjust that this Amendment seeks to single-handedly solve all aspects of crime, as I mentioned, is to misunderstand its purpose profoundly. This legislation is not a magic bullet. It is, however, a critical part of a multifaceted strategy aimed at strengthening our legal framework to address one of the most lethal forms of criminal activity. The assertion by the member, Mr. Speaker, reflects an amiss opportunity to recognise the potential impact of targeted legislative action as part of a broader crime reduction strategy. **(Applause)**

Moreover, it is quite unfortunate that the Member opposite views this essential legislative step through such a narrow lens. **(Applause)** This Bill, Mr. Speaker, seeks to enhance penalties and tighten controls around firearm offences specifically, because these are the tools within our legislative purview. **(Applause)** And so, let us not... No. I do read, so I know how to stand here and make my intervention **(applause)**

So let us not misplace the separation of powers and talk about things that are not specific to our mandate within this House. Mr. Speaker, this Bill indeed does exactly what we are trying to accomplish by targeting the most violent elements within our society. It is a measured, thoughtful response to a clear and present danger.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, while no single law can eradicate all crime, strong, decisive legal measures, let me reiterate that, Mr. Speaker, strong, decisive legal measures can and do make a significant difference in curbing the specific problems they target. It is through cumulative efforts, including social, educational and economic interventions, alongside robust legal frameworks, that we will see a comprehensive reduction in crime.

And so I urge my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, through you, including the Members of the “Opposite Side”, to consider the broader context and the potential impact of this Bill. And so, I would end with the words of my colleague whom I admire dearly that, “We ought to move forward not in a bipartisan way and not in a political way to try to bring politics into such a national issue”. But we must also be mindful that we are not to

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

misplace scepticism, but with a unified commitment, Mr. Speaker, we can ensure the safety or the continued safety and well-being of all our citizens in Grenada. Thank you.

**(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable MP for the constituency of St. John. Whose light is on? MP for Carriacou and Petite Martinique? The floor is yours, sir.

**Hon. Tevin Andrews:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, stand to give full support to this Bill, a very important Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Before I start, Mr. Speaker, I heard my honourable friend on the “Other Side” through you speaking about how he has to defend the poor, and seeing the hurt in the eyes of the aunties, the grandma’s and all of that. Mr. Speaker, that’s why we are here. That’s why we are passing this Bill today to lessen the hurt **(applause)** to lessen the pain of the poor and vulnerable by ensuring that there are stiffer penalties for those people who have an ulterior motive to create chaos in society, and take advantage of the poor and vulnerable in our society. That’s why we are here to protect them. So I hear you, but we are here to protect them.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of our Honourable Members, who are here today, to support the Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is of utmost importance as it aims to address a critical issue within our society, the spike of firearms and ammunition circulating illegally in the State of Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, by reducing the number of illegal firearms, we’re lessening the potential violent crimes and firearm-related incidents that threaten the safety of our beloved Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, to achieve this objective, we have already declared a firearm amnesty allowing individuals to surrender their illegal firearms without facing prosecution. However, it is essential that after the amnesty period ends, we have measures, and this is why we are putting the measures in place to enforce stricter penalties for those who continue to possess illegal firearms and ammunition.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

The Firearm (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, Mr. Speaker, 2024 seeks to amend various sections of the Firearms Act to increase penalties for firearm-related offences, by implementing mandatory prison sentences with no bail options for individuals found with legal firearms and ammunition.

We are sending a clear and strong message to those who hold dangerous weapons, that they will not be tolerated in our society. **(Applause)** The severity of this penalty, Mr. Speaker, will depend on the type of ammunition. For instance, Mr. Speaker, automatic firearms will incur severe penalties depending on the offences, and of course, Mr. Speaker, with a minimum sentence of three years, depending on the offence and in some cases, 10 years minimum.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the Bill introduces a separate offence for unlawful possession of a firearm or ammunition by individuals whose licences, certificates or permits have expired, lapsed or are otherwise invalid. This provision, Mr. Speaker, aims to prevent individuals from using outdated documentation as an excuse for possession and further strengthen our stands against illegal firearms. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the Bill sets out specific circumstances under the law under which a person will be deemed to be in possession of a firearm or ammunition. This clarity in the law, Mr. Speaker, will help ensure that there are no loopholes that individuals could exploit to evade prosecution. I understand, Mr. Speaker, that some may argue that the increased penalty may seem harsh.

However, we must prioritise the safety of our country, our society and our citizens over all else. **(Applause)** The threat posed by illegal firearms cannot be understated, and we must act decisively to remove those illegal weapons from our streets. With these few messages, Mr. Speaker, I rest my case, and I support the Amendments fully, this Bill fully. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for the constituency of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. I think the debate is now... Honourable MP for St. Mark.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

**Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the Bill for the amendment of the Firearms Act.

Mr. Speaker, 28 clauses, I think, to be amended, and I personally have no problem with the clauses or the amendments. Mr. Speaker, I might have a problem with the context or the context, and I'm going to speak to that as well, but using the law to curb infractions or contraventions of the law is an established norm, and there is nothing wrong with it.

Mr. Speaker, however, I heard the Minister say, and we're in June, well, the Minister, the Leader for Government's Business. He said, and I want to try to quote him. He said, "Well, this is perhaps the most important Bill that the Government has passed or will pass in the year". A crime prevention Bill is very important, but aren't there any other important Bills for the nation that might compete with that?

I am concerned that if half of the year we say, this is perhaps the most important Bill. And we cannot look at negative, curbing or restraining. We also have to look at opportunities for growth and development of our country as well. So I hope this would not be the most important Bill, maybe one of but not the most important.

Mr. Speaker, but I, too, am concerned about what... I'm querying. What happens in addition to the Bill? Right now, this is a standalone. Perhaps, some may say this is a knee-jerk effort to curb the rise in crime. Because certainly, as from the date I heard on the "Other Side", it has been increasing over the years, but in recent times the data have shown that there has been a jump. There's been a significant increase. And so that is why I mention knee-jerk because if you're going to impose a law to restrain people and not look at the root cause, not look at how you're going to deal with it, then it is a knee-jerk reaction, Mr. Speaker. It shows that there has not been any in-depth thought and reflection on the whole issue, the issue as a whole.

My colleague, here, for the Town of St. George, alluded to the lack of consultation for a critical section of the front liners when it comes to the law. And that is a matter of big concern. So there couldn't have been a time to consult? We just did something to say, we were doing something. It has to be something that is going to

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

have a positive impact.

So I ask myself things like training, things like education, things like creating opportunities, things like teaching young people about conflict resolution, because we know the majority of deaths in recent times by firearms or guns or however we call them, the victims have been young people. Where is the hope for young people? What are the opportunities for employment?

Mr. Speaker, this month, graduation has started. Two of my colleagues could not be here today because they have to go to graduation. And so, every form five is graduating. Later on, TAMCC would graduate. And I think, while the legislation should not deal with this, we had an agenda item that spoke to Ministerial Statements.

I was hoping that since the other alternative, the other measures that are going to be employing may not have relevance directly to this law, I thought maybe one or two ministers, the Prime Minister, for example, as Minister for National Security and who has the overall responsibility would have been telling us some of the things they are doing in addition to... A word came to my mind, perhaps it is inappropriate. I will not say it. But in addition to just increasing fines and increasing the imprisonment, the prison is already full. It's overflowing; that is what has been said, and if we just go by everything as a fine, it's a prison sentence. Just now, we wouldn't have, and as my colleague for the Town asked the question, are we going to resolve it by building more prisons?

Mr. Speaker, we had some programmes. The NNP Administration had some programmes. They have been attacked. They have been vilified. They have been thrown out, and that is the Government's right and prerogative to throw out anything that they are not satisfied with. But my question is, what has replaced it that is of greater value; that is of better benefit to the young people we are concerned about? What has replaced the IMANI Programme?

I heard they are having a re-registration. I hope that is not a guise, some kind of ruse to get IMANIS to come and hand them a pink slip. But, you know, we had the CESS Programme, we had the Soft Loan Programme, we had the MPower Programme,

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

and if they were not okay, then what has replaced them? Even if it could not be put in the section for Ministerial Statement, perhaps this Parliamentary Sitting could have been preceded by a statement by the Prime Minister. He does that on occasions, just to let us know not just the law to put you in prison or to make you pay money, but also to prevent, to give young people that opportunity and that hope, and we have not heard that yet. So I will be listening.

I have no problem with the fines and so on. If the judiciary has an issue, they will raise it from that point, but I have a serious problem. Because, you know, apart from the one additional year that the Government have offered or mandated that youths remain in school, what else? And that came with a plan. Up to now, we have not heard a concrete plan that says, "Youths who have been mandated to spend one more year in school will be offered xyz opportunities". We have not heard it yet, Mr. Speaker.

The Bill is saying to the general public that a life of crime is not the path to walk. Then, shouldn't we teach them a path to walk? Shouldn't we give them opportunities to walk various paths that can lead to a better quality of life and development for themselves, for their families, for the country? We're telling them what not to do, but we should also tell them what we're offering them so that they can do it.

Mr. Speaker, we agree on "This Side", that we need to have a collective effort to quell the spate of killings before it becomes a way of life in Grenada. We all pride ourselves on the safety and security of this country, and Grenada has benefited tremendously because of this, and I don't need to go into it.

But, however, Mr. Speaker, the means are woefully limited and inadequate to save our youth and our country if all we're going to do is charge you more money, which you can't pay and put you in prison for doing certain things. There have to be more effective and hopeful measures for our people.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said, I have no problems with the legislation as presented, my problem is that I do not see the Government making any tangible offer to the youths and saying, "Have no fear. We know you have problems. We know you have concerns and maybe what went before wasn't good enough for you. We have

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

something better to offer you; here is". Let us walk the better pathway, and let us not just offer our young people a deterrent for crime. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable MP for the constituency of St. Mark. MP for St. George South.

**Hon. Andy Williams:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to, first of all, humbly, give some advice to the Members on the "Other Side", Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that when we come into this Parliament, it is serious business. Mr. Speaker, I urge the Members on the "Other Side" to at least come prepared; at least come prepared, Mr. Speaker. We had the Bill to revise it, to go through it, Mr. Speaker, and when we come in Parliament, Mr. Speaker, we should be coming to debate the Bill, not anything else except the Bill. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I heard the MP for the Town of St. George said that he is on the front line. Mr. Speaker, let me remind him that it is the people, Mr. Speaker, who are on the front line. Gun violence, Mr. Speaker, most times, he may not be affected by it, but the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker, over the last few months have been traumatised, and have been concerned, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we as a Government would be irresponsible if we sat there and did nothing. But, Mr. Speaker, what bothers me is that we are coming to amend this Bill, and it seems, Mr. Speaker, like the Opposition is upset, like they are against us coming into Parliament today, Mr. Speaker, to address this matter. And, Mr. Speaker, while we were speaking, the Leader of the Opposition said, "God help us". Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to him, through you, that God indeed helped us. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the Government's stance on gun violence stems from a profound sense of responsibility to safeguard our citizens from harm. Mr. Speaker, we have seen over the past few months lives tragically cut short or forever altered by senseless acts of gun violence. Families mourn, communities suffer, and the fabric of our society is torn by these preventable tragedies.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

Mr. Speaker, let us be clear, the Government's efforts are not about restricting the rights of the responsible gun owners; rather, they are about enacting sensible measures to prevent firearms from falling into the wrong hands of criminals, those with severe mental issues or individuals prone to violence. By doing so, we aim to create a safer environment where our children can go to school without fear, where our neighbourhoods can thrive without the shadow of gun violence looming over them.

Furthermore, the Government recognise that gun violence is not just a matter of legislation, it requires coordinated effort involving law enforcement, health care professionals, educators and community leaders. It requires education and awareness campaigns to promote responsible gun ownership and storage practices. Importantly, these efforts are grounded in evidence and guided by the expert, stakeholders and broader public. They effect a balanced approach that exceeds the rights in our Constitution by protecting the safety of all our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable MP for St. John just gave some stats on some of the Caribbean islands with gun violence. And it shows that where you have stricter regulations, it leads to fewer crimes when it comes to gun violence. Mr. Speaker, even in the United States of America, there was a study done, and it showed that where the legislation was stricter, you had fewer crimes. So, Mr. Speaker, we are not just doing this because we just want to do something. Mr. Speaker, it was researched, and the evidence is there. Mr. Speaker, it is a fact. **(Applause)** So, Mr. Speaker, they can laugh as much as they want to laugh, but this is a serious matter, and this Government is, Mr. Speaker, prepared to do what we have to do in order to reduce gun violence.

And, Mr. Speaker, just let me say this, Grenada is poised between Trinidad, Venezuela and other islands, Mr. Speaker, where you have a lot of guns. Mr. Speaker, we are a prime target for those countries to supply guns. So if we don't do something now, Mr. Speaker, we will become like Trinidad, where we cannot go back. **(Applause)** So we are being proactive by taking measures, Mr. Speaker, that the "Other Side" may not have taken, but sometimes you have to do what is best for the country. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much, Honourable MP for St. George South. In sense we have exhausted the debate. I invite the Leader of Government's Business. Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to Members of the House. Mr. Speaker, I actually want to start by commending, in particular, the MP for the Republic of St. John (**laughter**) for her well-researched, articulate and erudite presentation this morning. (**Applause**) And to be frank, Mr. Speaker, I am not so sure that I can add anything more useful to what she has done. But we're in the midst of Youth Parliamentary debates that are ongoing, and so I saw two things from the "Other Side", which, from a pure technique point of view, I think, I should point out because it may stand out to our young parliamentarians who are debating in good step.

It's called distraction, in relation to the presentation from the MP for St. Mark which is, don't debate that which is before you, but divert attention to other things in the hope that you miss the mark of what we are treating with here today, which is a specific Bill to address increases in sentences for all, all firearms related offences, that's what we're here to debate and the reasons why.

So, one of the responses about what we are doing for young people, what we are doing for IMANI, what we are doing with MPower, Yutbiz, etcetera, is not a debate about the Firearms (Amendment) Bill. So, that's a distraction, but I will quickly respond to some of those issues.

What are we doing for the IMANIs? We are the ones who increased their salaries to EC\$1,200. (**Applause**) What are we doing for the young people on Yutbiz? There are at least 65 of them who have received soft loans and training programmes that are ongoing. (**Applause**) The Minister for Housing, Social and Community Development is not here, but she is piloting parenting programmes under the IRIE Program to address at-risk parents and at-risk youth. (**Applause**)

The Honourable Member for the Town of St. George talked about what other measures we need to take. We know that is where crime starts, from the home

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

**(applause)** from these functioning families, from young men and women with no parents or parents with poor parenting skills who themselves can't even cope with the challenges of life, much less parenting. And that is why the Minister for Social and Community Development has been keen to champion the need for ensuring that, in some cases, we have to teach parenting, and she has been piloting that. What are we doing?

We signed a memorandum of agreement with the Maria Holder Memorial Trust in Barbados to build Father Mallaghan's, to rebuild them **(applause)** to treat young men who otherwise don't have a place to live, but that's not the debate here is about this morning.

So perhaps the experienced colleague from St. Mark has not appreciated that yesterday marked two years since I was sworn in **(applause)** as Prime Minister and she has missed the enormous amount of time we spent reporting to the nation at the various town halls, the last of which ended at around 11 o' clock last night in St. George North East where we were reporting about what we are doing in relation to the young men.

Frontline. Well, crime doesn't begin and end in the Magistrate's Court in St. George's, St. Andrew, or Carriacou. Crime takes place in the streets of Grenada, in the villages of Grenada and being a Criminal Defence Attorney doesn't make you, as compared to the rest of us or the rest of the citizens, any more on the frontline of crime than we are. **(Applause)**

So, a stone's throw away from where the young man was executed in Snug Corner, is where I, the Minister for Mobilisation Implementation and Transformation and the MP for St. George South and the MP for North East, where this crime happened, we were there on Saturday afternoon talking with the young men. They said to me in the entire history of Grenada, no politician, no Prime Minister, no minister has ever come to them where they are; in their homes, in their streets. They said that one passed in the black van, he will **(applause)** go up in Vendome or Willis, and if he were here, you would have thought that it was a paramilitary exercise.

So, Mr. Speaker, the young parliamentarian watching the debate... This debate

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

is about the Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, and specifically the amendments to the sentencing surrounding the Firearms Bill. When you can't address the subject, you will engage in distraction, throw mud and hope something sticks. It's a technique. If the "Other Side" isn't paying attention, you might get away with it, but we are paying attention.

The next technique is if logic and reason fail, resort to passion and emotion. And so, the learned and distinguished friend, as we would say if we were in the Magistrate's Court or the High Court... But the Honourable MP for the Town of St. George, as we would say in this House, admitted he didn't know we had Parliament today. He came back from New York last night, so I understand logical reason wouldn't prevail here because he probably wasn't prepared.

I noticed he has not made reference to a single clause in the Bill. So, therefore, you resort to passion and you resort to emotion. **(Applause)** And as I told the Honourable Leader of Government's Business this morning—once a very good learned and distinguished friend, of both of ours, who also practised extensively at the Criminal Defence Bar, we were in court once before the magistrate who is a very senior magistrate who is affectionately known as "Chief". We were, believe it or not, in Gouyave, and the Magistrate's Court in Gouyave always has a certain theatre to it, and there was an impartial plea by the defence council on behalf of his client. Somebody looked at him and said, "You talk good. You talk real good, but I am going to send your client up". **(Laughter)** So you see, Mr. Speaker, we have to mix passion with logic, with empirical facts and with truth.

So let's do a little history lesson, you see, Mr. Speaker, some of us seem to forget this is not about politics. This is about facts. Some of us forget that we were in office. Some of us seem to forget, Mr. Speaker, that we've had the opportunity and, in many instances, to their credit, we were working on things. So there is something called "Caribbean Firearms Roadmap" since 2013 **(applause)**, of which the then administration was part, of which a focal point had been appointed to address this very issue of the state of Grenada's legislation in relation to firearms.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

And the report prepared under their administration... And I don't want to misquote them, Mr. Speaker, so bear with me, and let me find the report. The report clearly required the strengthening of Grenada's firearms legislation across the board, so this Amendment, Mr. Speaker, on sentencing is just the start because the report clearly pointed out other loopholes in the legislation specifically as it relates to brokerage in relation to firearms, explosives, trans-shipment, our international obligations in relation to other countries to report the tracing, the marking of firearms, it's a decade in the making. So the need to strengthen our firearms legislation is clear, and just so that the public understands the context of what we are dealing with here, let me point this out, Mr. Speaker.

Our Firearms Act dates back to 1968, pre-independence. It was amended in 1973, 1976 and 1990. So there has been no major amendment for the last 30 years, we are now in 2024, Mr. Speaker, and the MP for St. Andrew South West gave some statistics about reporting, but reporting isn't a conviction. Because you can report stuff, and cases could disappear, etcetera.

I am going to give up to 2023 and up to 2024 the actual statistics in relation to convictions for firearms possession. 2019—13, 2020—10, 2021—4, 2022—11, 2023—30, 2024, six months, only 35. That is in relation to firearms actually confiscated by the police in the last six months. **(Applause)** Now, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the amnesty, four firearms and 131 rounds of ammunition have been handed in by persons, and I want to commend these persons **(applause)** for making use of the amnesty.

I want to take this opportunity to reemphasise that the amnesty is in effect. The amnesty is in effect. We are encouraging persons who have illegal or illicit firearms, persons who know of persons who have illegal firearms and ammunition, to encourage them to take advantage of the amnesty. We are being transparent. We are being opened. We are saying to you that the carrot has been extended, make use of the opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, as we speak, there are ongoing active investigations where we are confident, based on my debriefing, that even more persons are going to be arrested and

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

charged with firearms. So, Mr. Speaker, we want to encourage persons; the amnesty is in effect, take advantage of the amnesty. We will do everything, Mr. Speaker, in our power in the next month to highlight, to emphasise, and to encourage persons to take advantage of the amnesty. I want to invite the Honourable Members on the “Other Side” to do so because we indicated, Mr. Speaker, that we would amend the legislation to create stiffer penalties for persons thereafter who are found with illicit firearms.

So, the Honourable MP for the town of St. George talks about corporate crime, tax crime, little man crime and poor man crime. All crime is crime. **(Applause)** Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how killing someone with a firearm could ever be classified as insignificant. I don't know where maiming someone with a firearm could ever be classified as insignificant. What is the value of a firearm? What is it made for? It is made to kill. It is made to maim. Why would you want to encourage people to have firearms? Why would you do everything in your power to dissuade them from doing so?

So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the table of increases in the sentences, they are meant, Mr. Speaker, to send a clear message that from a values perspective, and I want to emphasise this, Mr. Speaker, we don't pass laws for the sake of passing laws.

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

The law must be reflective of the values of the society.

If we are saying as a society, public safety, public order, the preservation of life, the preservation of limb, trumps everything. If you are dead, there are no human rights to talk about. If you are dead, you can't fight over property. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have to make it clear that our laws reflect our values, and if our values are the sanctity of life, then we should do everything in our power to make sure that our law reflects that.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about things like the unlawful importation, exportation and transshipment of firearms, firearms are brought into Grenada. We want to make it clear that if you're caught engaging in this, the consequences would be condemn, that they will be severe. What is the existing fine if you are transshipping,

***Sitting of the House of Representatives***  
***Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024***  
***At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***  
***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

importing, or exporting unlawful firearms? The fine is EC\$3,000. What is the message we are sending? Continue doing it? EC\$3,000 summary conviction. Imprisonment, six months.

Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't call their names, but I'll make this point. Two of the young men who were killed in the recent spate of gun violence, in one case, his first conviction was in 2012, thereafter he had 21 convictions, and his life came to an end abruptly, and I will daresay, before his natural time in 2024. His first conviction was in 2012. **(Sound of time bell)** Mr. Speaker, may I have one minute to wrap up?

**Mr. Speaker:** Granted.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** His first conviction was in 2012, so for the next 12 years, 2024, 21 convictions on average of almost two per year.

The other one, his first conviction was in 2005, thereafter 26 convictions; 2005 to 2024, 19 years, his life came to an end. Sometimes, you actually save their lives by putting them in jail. It's a cold truth that is sometimes difficult to swallow. Sometimes you have to protect people from themselves.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to re-emphasise as it was so clearly put by the MP for St. John that this is simply one of the tools to combat the consequences of the illicit proliferation of firearms and the use of firearms within Grenada and this is part of a broader, regional strategy, Mr. Speaker, that we are treating with.

I obviously do not have time, but there are lengthy reports coming from CARICOM IMPACS that speaks to the trafficking of firearms, the impact it has had and the measures we need to take from a public health point of view, from collaboration with our colleagues in the region including as you may be aware, Mr. Speaker, some of our countries have joined a lawsuit in the United States brought by Mexico against the gun manufacturers in the United States because that is where the firearms are coming from.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the indulgence that you have granted to me, and I too strongly recommend and support the enactment of the Bill. Thank you.  
**(Applause)**

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister. And now Leader of His Majesty's Opposition.

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sometimes I sit in this Honourable House... After my years of experience in this House I become more and more troubled about some of the things, the mind-set, the language and words I have heard from Members of this House.

Mr. Speaker, I heard it being said that the Members on the "Opposition Side" were not addressing the Bill. It is quite fascinating to hear this, and it's coming from mouths you did not expect. The Member for the Town of St. George, Mr. Speaker, was addressing specific problems that relate to crime and activities occurring in the country. We've come here with a Bill to deal with gun violence and aspects of that, so it is right and proper to speak to those issues. So I don't know how that could be defined as being out of context, maybe I wasn't here for the last 40 years. Out of context? And who is saying this, people that just come here for two days are talking to Members on "This Side" about you didn't read Bill, you didn't go here, you didn't do this. I am a Member of this House. I am a Member of "This Side", and I find it strange and insulting, Mr. Speaker, that those languages are being used.

Mr. Speaker, because I have been here for a while, I need to advise. I need to make this point. The Standing Order of this House specifically refers to reading a person's speech in this House. It seems like we have forgotten that, reading right through. Their heads are stuck in a sheet of paper, which is not in keeping with the standards of this House. **(Inaudible comment a Member)** If you didn't know, you just have to talk. Talk. This is a Member, Mr. Speaker, who came to my office and then said some things afterwards, but listen to him today. Listen to him today. Mr. Speaker, I am just advising again, and I mentioned it before, that the Standing Order of this House must be kept.

I heard people have been congratulating a brilliant speech and research. If I write something and I give it to you to read, then you can sound good, but you are stuck

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

on a sheet of paper. That is not what debating in this House is all about. So I could not give any commendation to what is fundamentally wrong. I would not give commendation **(inaudible comment by a Member)** because little children always make statements like this. Little children.

Mr. Speaker, it appears that Members on the “Government Side” seem to think that by coming to this House, and posturing about all the sentences and the increase in penalties, it sounds great. We will solve crime tomorrow! Yes, we will! We will because we have increased penalties to a massive amount. We're going to put you in jail for 30, 40, or 20 years if you hold a gun. It sounds as if you're a bad boy because you're dealing with the bad boys. Oh yes? That is how you're dealing with problems?

Societies have had problems over the years, such as in Grenada and other countries, and they have passed laws. There is something called the death penalty for murder. People still commit murder. So you could pass all the laws...

In fact, there are a lot of laws that are on the books that are not being dealt with appropriately, and the management of the country has to take responsibility. Our people ducking responsibility when things are happening in your country. If you are in charge. Things are happening. You have to take fundamental responsibility. **(Applause)** Nobody would say that you did it yourself, but you have a responsibility, so don't duck responsibility. You will try to duck. You will use words, but it won't suffice. They might say I'm talking with emotions. Yes, I have to talk with emotions. Yes. If they are not used to other Parliaments to see Members operate, they will understand maybe they should learn, take time to learn.

So, you could bring high-powered guns. Big announcement. Is that going to solve crime? Bring in more guns that will solve? This is not a critique of taking steps... The Member for the Town of St. George did not criticise from what... I was listening. He did not criticise or was against the fact that the Government was coming in with some initiative, he may not agree with all aspects of it. He was saying that if you believe that it will solve the problem, the joke you're making is what he was saying. I heard he has not mentioned the clauses. Those of us who understand the issue of science, you know

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

if you have one thing being said and all that you have is ABCD, then why do you have to go through every clause?

The fundamental thing is all items on the clauses, as I read them, and say I did not read... Did not read. All it talks about is an increase in sentences and increasing penalties, do you have to say whether it's EC\$3,000, EC\$40,000, EC\$20,000, 10 years jail or 15 years jail? Nonsense! Nonsense!

The young men and young women that we're talking about here, we know that the society has its problems, Mr. Speaker, when we were in Government there are times when there were an upsurge in crimes and no one cannot say you going to blame the Government or ministers of Government when there is a... Government might take some action which might yield negative result so we can deal with that, but to say they are directly responsible is a mistake.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we are saying is the social and economic conditions in our country, the initiatives you take will, in fact, because the fundamental reason will, in fact, deal with the issues that we are trying to solve. So by coming here, you come in here to deal with penalties in the hope that those initiatives will help you to lower the incentive to commit crime (**applause**) and activities of violence. That's why we're here. So the issue of dealing with the social consequence of your action is relevant to this debate. So, I don't understand, he is not addressing the clause. Nonsense. Absolute nonsense, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, those young people are dealing with issues that when I was growing up, we never had to deal with, so it is not a question of condoning or being sympathetic, but it's a question of understanding the problems. The social media problems have their pluses and their minuses. The technological advances that we are in today, we didn't have to face this, I didn't have to face this growing up in my little village of Brizan and Happy Hill. I didn't have to face this. But the young people today are faced with all those problems and we have to come to terms and when we are talking about dealing with crime which I assume the Government is intending to do by coming here. We have to broadly talk about other issues (**applause**) that we can use to

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

deal with this problem.

If we are coming here just to talk about guns then... well I don't know what we are doing here. I assume the Government's intention is to advance the cause of creating a more peaceful society and fewer problems for our society. That's what I assume. Therefore, these Opposition Members here, from what I have heard, never spoke that you should not take initiative. What we're saying is if you believe that it will solve the problems of crime and issues in your society, then you're fundamentally flawed in your reasoning.

Mr. Speaker, I was going to point out a while ago, when similar issues occurred you have to gather all aspects of the society, the Bar Association, the police force, the private sector, the religious communities leadership, Government of course, the trade unions and all other persons who have demonstrated interest in dealing with issues of this nature. We got them together because we understood that we don't have all the answers to the problems. We understood that just coming into Parliament because we have the majority and we passed the Bill, yes, yes, we have succeeded, we have solved crime in the country. We understood that it is one aspect, but that by itself, so I hope it is not said that the Opposition came here and they criticised us, nonsense. The Opposition is advancing a rationale for overall solutions to the problems which you intend to help with by coming here today.

Mr. Speaker, the issues of our society, we have to come to terms with this. The leadership that we had in parental homes that we got as young boys and girls growing up... In many cases, the young people in the homes are left fatherless. The women are mostly by themselves. In many cases, they are by themselves, and they need support, so we have to bear that in mind when we are coming up with solutions. That's why all the programmes that we initiated, and there could be many others, who are going to say, Mr. Speaker, that what we came up with was comprehensive, and maybe the new Government might come up with different ideas, additional points.

We are not saying what we did was perfect, but we are saying to cut these programmes out because it was started by NNP is backwards, so to speak. So the

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

IMANI... It's a simplistic approach. I heard we increase the IMANI by EC\$1,200, is that the solution to the IMANI? What nonsense is this? I'm I really listening? I'm I listening, Mr. Speaker, that EC\$1,200 because it is a break. The IMANI Programme was not meant to be about the amount of money, it's about training and mindset and development, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** That is what it was meant to be. You talked. Give me a chance. Mr. Prime Minister, take it. Mr. Prime Minister, learn to take it. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** Stop back talk...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hello. Honourable MP, just hold.

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** I wish, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Just hold. I would tolerate a certain amount of bickering and exchange in the House, but once it becomes disturbing and confusion-like, I am going to stop it. So, bickering to a certain extent would be tolerated, but I urge you to control what you're saying and your emotions. Also you, Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, you seem to have become very emotional...

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** I have a right, Mr. Speaker.

**(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Listen to me, please.

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** I have a right. Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Listen to me, please. And then once you become very emotional, our language...

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** What is wrong with my language, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Speaker:** ...We have to take care of.

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** What was wrong with my language, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, what was wrong with my language?

**Mr. Speaker:** Please. Honourable Leader, the Speaker is on his feet. Can you sit?

**(Inaudible comment by Members)**

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** I could take it. You're the boss, go ahead. Go ahead. **(Laughter)** I'm not expecting that today.

**Mr. Speaker:** I sat and I listened to the Honourable gentleman making reference to language used here, how people speak, and making reference to people reading. I, as the Speaker, I am aware of the Standing Order, and so the Honourable gentleman must know that the Speaker may use his discretion. I am sure the Honourable gentleman knows this and so, in the same vein, when the Honourable gentleman urged and encouraged Members to speak in a certain way and context, I, as the Speaker trying to ensure that what you advised this House, stays across the floor. So that it is not just language for one set of people, but language for the House and for the Chamber. Honourable Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, I now invite you to continue.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I must admit, I don't understand what you have just said, honestly. It's above my head. According to somebody, it's above my pay grade and competence.

Mr. Speaker, I must comment on this and that's my right to. I made the point. The IMANI Programme is a programme meant to empower, develop and aid and support the young people. Not about EC\$1,200 or EC\$1,000 or EC\$500, this is not about the money.

In fact, we do not have an IMANI Programme right now, because the IMANI Programme... You were supposed to come into the programme for two years, train and get some... **(Inaudible comment by Members)** Mr. Speaker, you just spoke. Please give me a chance. Respect the "Father of the House" at least, although you say self-styled father... look in the Hansard and you will see who came up with it. It didn't come from me. But I am saying, Mr. Speaker....

**Mr. Speaker:** Sorry. Honourable Member for St. George North-East.

**Hon. Ron Redhead:** Mr. Speaker, I am standing on a Point of Order, section 39 of the Standing Order, "relevance to the Bill that is before us". What is the relevance of mentioning the IMANI Programme? So, Mr. Speaker, for clarity, can the Member provide relevance why he is talking about the state of the IMANI Programme when we are dealing with the amendment to the Firearms Act?

**Mr. Speaker:** Your point is made. Honourable Leader of His Majesty's Opposition.

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, this is mange-puput woi. Mr. Speaker...

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Leader...

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker...

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Leader...

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker...

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Leader of the Opposition...

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** I just advised you to watch your language.

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** Man-j-puput?

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes.

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** That's a normal word, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** In Parliament?

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** Yes. It's a normal word, Mr. Speaker, if you don't know the history. But imagine someone gets up on a Point of Order, no Point of Order. He doesn't even understand the basic fundamentals of a Point of Order. And that's why they will never learn, because they are never interested in listening and taking advice. They will never learn. They will never learn, Mr. Speaker.

Let me add, it seems like I'm really touching some corns this morning. I will continue to touch them. I hope, Mr. Speaker, you are taking the time for the interventions that took place here this morning. The "Father of the House" must at least be respected in what he is doing in this House, Mr. Speaker.

**Sitting of the House of Representatives**  
**Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024**  
**At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's**

**Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024**

Mr. Speaker, you meant to help to train the young people, create programmes and if the Government comes up with any programme to aid the young people's success, we will be the first to support any programme because we have already said, Mr. Speaker, that we do not believe we have control over all initiatives and programmes. Since the people voted for a new Government, they expected some new items in addition to what was successful before, not getting rid of it, but adding to what was in train before and working and coming up with their own ideas. We assume, as human beings, it doesn't matter what qualification you have, there are ideas that can come from **(sound of time bell)** the lowest person in society. Mr. Speaker, I hope and I said, I hope you took into consideration my time.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say this. You need to look at programmes that create jobs and opportunities because, as I said, many of the households are headed by women. A lot of the initiative programmes that can be useful in helping women, empowering them, were initiated before, and they could be expanded. So I think it's important for us to look at those because that will help give the women more opportunity to help and support their families and to help the young men and women under their watch, so to speak.

It's a mistake not to have a regular de-bushing programme, and we say yes... I know how people think, but it exists in all countries. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** Mr. Speaker, whether you go to Jamaica, you see it, whether you go to Trinidad...

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Member.

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Are you aware that the bell went?

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. You want to cut me off? I

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

mean, you have the power, Mr. Speaker. You have the power to cut me off, Mr. Speaker, but let me just say this.

The Police Force is an integral part of the development of what takes place in your country and solving... **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** Lord, have mercy.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** Listen. Listen. Mr. Speaker, I realise I have touched enough corns here this morning and therefore I would not want to create... some people might have a heart attack if I continue here.

So, because of this, Mr. Speaker, I will save you and the House from any serious illness that might take place here today, but I just want to say this before I leave, Mr. Speaker, because I have to leave for a major graduation.

In fact, I think it is a terrible time to have a Parliament session because most Members are absent here today because of a serious graduation ceremony. So I will leave and I hope to come back because I told them I will just pass for maybe half an

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

hour and come back, hopefully the Parliament will still continue. I will be back to do my responsibility, but I will still give the Members a heart attack, Mr. Speaker, and I hope you are not among them, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable MP and Leader of His Majesty's Opposition. I wish you well at the graduation as well. Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I started my discourse this morning by saying that I believe that this Bill, probably, could have been one of the most significant Bills to be passed in this House in 2024. I am not happy, Mr.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's  
Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

Speaker, having heard the deliberations by the Opposition Leader in particular because, I believe, Mr. Speaker, this Bill needs to be properly studied. It's a long document. It has some far-reaching consequences for people possessing illegal firearms, but even more importantly, because of the prevalence of crime and the creeping proliferation of crime that has been happening around us, we must treat this with a very great degree of seriousness. And so, Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned that it appears that the Leader of the Opposition did not study this Bill.

Because one, he made certain declarations. He said, Mr. Speaker, that the increase in sentencing, and also, I believe he was referring to the increase in the fines, classifying it as nonsense. But, Mr. Speaker, if we pay close attention to what has been happening, there has been a general call by the population to stiffen the penalties and jail sentencing for people who possess these illegal firearms and turn it on their colleagues. There has been a clarion call for the Government to do something about the situation that confronts us. So, therefore, this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is a direct response to the call by our population to respond to the proliferation of firearms in our society, and so we are responding appropriately.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about ducking responsibility, Mr. Speaker, this Government of two years have held a number of town hall meetings throughout the length and breadth of this beautiful island, including Carriacou, where Ministers of Government stood to give an account of our stewardship for the last two years. **(Applause)** But not only that...

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business, you may continue.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, not only did we give an account of our stewardship, but we gave voice to the voiceless. **(Applause)** We fielded numerous questions from ordinary people, making recommendations and contributions towards the development of our beautiful tri-island state. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we stood up tall, owned up to our responsibility, and we gave an account of our stewardship and this, Madam Deputy

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

Speaker, underscores our servant leadership that is felt throughout the length and breadth of this country.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to say in closing that we did speak to our young men and women turning to a life of productivity and making a contribution towards the development of this country. We have a number of programmes, including Youth in Agriculture and the Yutbiz Programme, Madam Deputy Speaker, that are available to our people. The MPower Programme for our young men and all of these programmes, Madam Deputy Speaker, are available; help is available for all. We are ready. We stand ready to assist.

And let me just say, Madam Deputy Speaker, a lot of these people who possess these illegal firearms are not unemployed. They have chosen a life of crime, but they are not unemployed, and the record proves that. And so, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is our responsibility as leaders to set the tone by way of enacting legislation to treat with the proliferation of these illegal weapons and to advise our young people and provide the enabling environment for them to find jobs and to build solid careers and that is exactly what we have been doing.

So I just want to take this opportunity now, Madam Deputy Speaker, to say thank you to all of those who firstly studied the Bill, and if we had to give a prize today for contribution, I am certain that the prize this time will go to the youngest Member of Parliament representing the parish or the constituency of St. John for her sterling contribution this morning. **(Applause)** But, I want to thank everybody for their contribution to this Bill on the debate of this Bill, and I just want to commend this Bill to the House. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2024***

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I beg to move that the House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider this Bill, Clause by Clause.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**House in Committee.**

**House resumes.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Members, I have to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment. Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Chairman's Report adopted.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a third time and passed.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Firearms (Amendment) (No.2) Bill, 2024

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading for a Bill shortly entitled, Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

**(The Speaker and the Clerk converse privately)**

**Question propose.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill, the Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024, is a Bill which is aligned with the previous Bill just read and passed in this Parliament.

It seeks to give some measure of power to the legal system to ensure that people found with those illegal weapons are not granted bail. As we are all aware, Mr. Speaker the firearms amnesty which was declared in the State of Grenada on May 1 comes to an end on July 30, 2024.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill seeks to ensure that persons who are found with illegal firearms and ammunition would now face a mandatory prison sentence without the option of bail. Further, Mr. Speaker, in the case where firearms are automatic rifles, these individuals so contravened in the Act will face a stiffer penalty in that a prison term of no less than three years will be granted.

Mr. Speaker, to give legal effect to the aforementioned condition on which the firearm amnesty was declared, the Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024, seeks to amend section 47 of the Criminal Procedure Code, Chapter 72B, the principal code, to do the following:

1. To extend the categories of offences in respect of which a Magistrate shall

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

not admit a person to bail to include offences under the Firearms Act, Cap. 105, which are punishable by imprisonment for a term of five years.

So, Mr. Speaker, under the Firearms Act, there are a number of offences for which the sentence is five years or more, which means that when this Bill is passed, persons who do the following will not be granted bail.

- Those who are found with unlawful acquisition or disposal of a firearm;
- Offences converting into a prohibited weapon;
- Offences of taking a pawned firearm or ammunition;
- Offences of unlawful possession of a firearm or ammunition;
- Carrying a firearm or ammunition in a public place or discharging those firearms in a public place.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am backed up to give some examples, because one must understand and appreciate that this particular Bill seeks to ensure that when people are found with these weapons and when they commit these offences they are not allowed to walk the street again freely as if nothing happened, but the court would ensure that these people who violate the Act, when caught, will be sent to prison awaiting the sentencing and fines as the case may be.

So, Mr. Speaker, this particular Bill contains four clauses. Clause 1 speaks to the short title and the effective date. The effective date for this is also the 30th day of July, 2024, on which this one will come into effect. Again, coinciding with the effective date of the Firearm (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill of 2024.

Clause 2, Mr. Speaker, provides for the application of the Act to legal proceedings instituted on or after the date of its commencement.

Clause 3 seeks to amend section 47 of the principal code to prohibit a Magistrate from admitting to bail any person charged with an offence under the Firearms Act, Cap. 105.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, we agree that it is critical that we understand what is obtained in this Bill so that our people are not caught unaware. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we take the time to slowly go through all of these things so that the general

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

public can understand what is obtained and that we are fully abreast with what is happening. These are critical pieces of legislation which aid us in the fight against crime. Many of our citizens have made the call for stiffer penalties. Many have made the call that people who commit these crimes should not be granted bail, should be pulled off the streets and allow justice to be served by way of the court system.

So this, Mr. Speaker, corrects a problem that we've had for a long time, when we have seen these types of crimes happening in our country, that the people who are perpetrating these crimes are not allowed bail but are brought on remand awaiting their sentencing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker, I want to rise on a point of clarification before the debate proceeds.

**Mr. Speaker:** Go ahead.

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker, I have been told earlier that I didn't read the Bill. I have read the Bill. I have read the previous Bill and I have read this Bill. Is the Member introducing the same Bill which says about Magistrates not granting bail, but you can go to the High Court? Because the Member indicated...

**(Inaudible comment by a Member)**

**Hon. Peter David:** But no. You indicated that people are going to be denied bail and pulled off the street. That is not what this Bill says. I am just asking, are we speaking of the same Bill, or is it his misinterpretation of what the Bill entails, or does he impose the intention of the Government on what the Bill actually says? I just need clarification before we proceed to the debate because this Bill says nothing of what the

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

Member says.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I mean you either rise on a Point of Order...

**Hon. Peter David:** Clarification.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** I am saying he is certainly **(inaudible comment)** in order to have the matter addressed. I am not too sure he has the opportunity to respond so I am not so sure what it means by point of clarification.

**Mr. Speaker:** I tolerated it. It wasn't a Point of Order. He wanted to be clear about what the Member was saying. Can you respond in terms of his lack of clarity?

**(Inaudible comment by Members)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Just hold. Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** I don't know that we're saying anything different. I think we're saying exactly the same thing. So I would ask, what is the question really?

Mr. Speaker, I would simply suggest that we continue with the debate. If the Member has information that I don't have maybe he can share it with the House. But as far as I'm concerned, I've given the context within which the Bill is formed, and the details of the Bill as to how it is going to be implemented.

**Mr. Speaker:** Agreed.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Hon. Peter David:** I have no difficulty doing that, Mr. Speaker. All I am simply saying is what the Member said is that this Bill is going to take people off the streets and deny them bail when there is a gun, that is not what I'm seeing in the Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024, but if that is what we are going to debate, I'm fine with it.

**Mr. Speaker:** All right. The Honourable Leader of Government's Business will proceed?

**(Inaudible comment by a Member)**

**Mr. Speaker:** You finish? Okay, because I was going to allow you to proceed, and maybe the same point that you raised, the clarity, might come during the debate. But you're finished?

**(Inaudible comment by a Member)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay. So it's now open to the... Open the floor... Sorry. Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as part of the challenge of dealing with the proliferation and use of firearms and as another tool within the cumulative list of things we need to do, this Amendment, the Criminal Procedure Code, is part of that process.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to contextualise this by first indicating that the Magistrates Court or what sometimes people call the "Inferior Courts", is a Creature of Statute and what that means is that the magistrates' court is in fact created by legislation from the Houses of Parliament. And therefore, Parliament has the power to increase or decrease the authority, functions and the role and the jurisdiction of

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

magistrates. I want to repeat that.

Magistrates are Creatures of Statute and they are created by legislation coming out of this House, so there's a Magistrates Act which sets out the jurisdiction of Magistrates, both in civil and in criminal matters. And therefore, whether or not a magistrate has the power to admit someone to bail or not is a matter that this House is entitled as of law to treat with.

The High Court or the Supreme Court is a court of original jurisdiction and in that sense stands in a place of superiority to that of the Magistrate's Court and can exercise supervisory and appellate jurisdiction in some instances over the Magistrate's Court. The Supreme Court is created by our Constitution, and therefore, when we make reference to the judiciary and specifically the Supreme Court, Parliament is far more limited and restricted in its ability to limit the original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.

And I've given this preamble to indicate that the amendment to the Criminal Procedure Code is not in any way, shape or form addressing the powers of the Supreme Court. And therefore, the Supreme Court has the right, as this Bill clearly says, to admit someone to bail as well as to order a Magistrate to admit someone to bail, that's the High Court, that's the Supreme Court. We are not touching this.

What we are touching is the Magistrate's Court, an Inferior Court. A court created by law, ordinary legislation that emanates from this House. And so this House has the power to pass laws, to expand or to limit the jurisdiction of Magistrates. What we are seeking to do, Mr. Speaker, is in fact in this case to limit the jurisdiction of the magistrates to admit to bail to release someone on bail who has been charged with contravention of the Firearms Act, where the minimum fixed sentence is five years or more.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to read, with your leave, a brief article. I will leave out the name of the perpetrator, just so that we under the challenges of what we're doing.

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker, before... A Point of Order—to give the source of what is being read in Parliament, because normally you circulate the articles which

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

will be quoted, but I am prepared now to simply be given the source so that the source can be verified by the Members. That is the normal procedure in the Parliament.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am aware. Honourable Prime Minister, do you wish to declare the source?

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would perhaps rephrase what I was saying because it will have the same effect because the source of the article is “The New Today”, but even without The New Today, I have knowledge of the facts in any event in my capacity as Minister for National Security. So I can either give the facts in my capacity as Minister for National Security or for the benefit of the Members, it’s The New Today article, it is Vol. 16, No. 25. Let me just make sure I have it right. And if I may, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Speaker:** Would you mind not referencing the newspaper? Kindly proceed.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** I have no difficulty; newspapers are public documents, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, please, please...

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** I was asked for the source, and I provided the source.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, yes. Please proceed, Honourable...

**(Inaudible comment by Members)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Please proceed, Honourable Prime Minister, without referencing the newspaper.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Sure.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** So, Mr. Speaker, it says on Thursday, 23rd November 2023, officers executed a search warrant at the premises of a named person, 34 years old, self-employed, and it gives the district. It led to the seizure of five firearms, five and 281 rounds of ammunition. As a result, this person was arrested and charged with the offence of possession of illegal firearms and possession of ammunition. He appeared I will not give the district, but at the Magistrate Court on a fixed date and was granted bail. What does he do? You think someone has five firearms, five and 218 rounds of ammunition... Are we in Ukraine? Are we in Sudan? Afghanistan? The Gaza Strip?

Mr. Speaker, Members of this Honourable House, this is the kind of challenge that we are facing. This is not just the possession of firearms. This is the kind of trafficking and commercialisation of illicit firearms that is taking place. What is the impact of that on law enforcement after this kind of work, this kind of effort at interception, putting their lives at risk and then the day after, they're back out on the streets?

Now, with the Amendment, which we are optimistic will also pass in the Upper House, the Firearm Act, someone caught in such a situation will, once found guilty, be liable to a minimum sentence of at least five years. And we are saying that in no circumstances should you be denied bail by a magistrate. They'll have the right to appeal to the High Court, the judge... They'll have the right but let me be more circumspect with my language. They will have the right to apply to the High Court for bail. The High Court will hear arguments as to whether or not bail should be granted. But we are not prepared, Mr. Speaker, to simply sit by and watch this pattern and this trend continue.

In my earlier presentation, I made the point that two of these young men, whose lives were regrettably cut short, who were gunned down, didn't die in a motor vehicle

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

accident, didn't die of natural causes, but were gunned down. They were executed in public places, frequented by members of the public, where members of the public could also have been at risk. They had 21 and 26 antecedents or convictions spanning 12 and 19 years, respectively.

So, the state, frankly, the State's first priority, the very reason for the existence of States, is to try and ensure that there is public safety and public order as much as possible. That is, to a large extent, why people organise themselves into nation-states.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it is likely that people will raise concerns about the fundamental freedoms of citizens and their right not to be deprived of their liberty except by due process, and there is due process. Your right to appeal to the High Court should you run afoul, sorry, to apply to High Court should you run afoul of the legislation in circumstances where the minimum sentence is five years is not in any way hindered. But the right of innocent citizens, in particular, not to have their lives and limbs at risk as a result of illegal use and possession of firearms and ammunition, Mr. Speaker, when balancing the scale, must trump the rights of criminals **(applause)** to have in possession and to use illegal firearms.

And so this Amendment, Mr. Speaker, is meant to reinforce our approach to a zero to low tolerance for the use, possession and trafficking of illegal firearms. And I want to re-emphasise that the statistics throughout the region, from the Bahamas in the north to Trinidad and Guyana in the south, show repeatedly that oftentimes multiple homicides are carried out by criminals who are on bail. And we have to use whatever tool is available to us to minimise, in the context of Grenada, the risk to public safety by allowing persons who are caught with illicit firearms to be allowed to easily go back into the streets and repeat the crime and the perpetration of the crime.

And I want to make the point. When the Honourable MP for Carriacou and Petite Martinique talked about people praying for the poor and vulnerable. There are instances when a young man misguided from poor background would feel attracted to a firearm and may genuinely run afoul of the law once, he's not a criminal, etcetera, etcetera, and that we need to give persons like this every opportunity to ensure that

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

they get an opportunity to in fact reform and rehabilitate.

And that opportunity is there because they can apply to the High Court, a judicial officer, the High Court Judge, a serious, sober, well-experienced judge who would have the ability to hear arguments from the prosecution or arguments from defence counsel. In fact, sometimes the prosecutor, after reviewing the file, may very well say, based on the fact that the young man is mistaken, no antecedents, and they are satisfied that this was a mistake, they may say we're not even objecting today.

But I also want us to appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that there is significant trafficking in firearms and that, because of Grenada and the Caribbean's geo-strategic location, we are subject to a number of things. There are guns for food trafficking. There are guns for food trafficking, and there are guns for US trafficking.

So, for example, in the context of Venezuela, as you are aware, there are sanctions and embargos. There are people who are trafficking firearms from South America in exchange for food in the US. There's a situation in Haiti where people are trafficking firearms in exchange for guns and food. There's human trafficking taking place, backed up by the use of illicit and illegal firearms.

There is, sadly and regrettably, a situation where, in recent times, it has been highlighted that within the context of the Caribbean, persons of Caribbean descent, born into the United States, have been engaging in the trafficking of firearms in the context of the Caribbean. And, Mr. Speaker, this is something that has been flagged at a regional level in several reports, and I want to since I have been asked to give the source of stuff, I will seek to make reference to the November 2023 publication by a number of regional bodies, including CARICOM IMPACS. And, Mr. Speaker, I will simply give a quick summary of some of the things.

The proliferation of illicit firearms, ammunition, parts and components has been prevalent across CARICOM and the wider Caribbean in recent years. Given the region's poorest borders and its strategic location as a key transshipment point, gun violence in the Caribbean is often associated with the intertwined factors of gang violence, drug trafficking and access to illicit firearms.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

The recently completed Caribbean Firearm study noted firearms as the “Weapon of Choice” in approximately 80% of homicides in CARICOM. In layman's terms, it means the vast majority of murders within CARICOM are conducted by the use of firearms, with illegal firearms as the primary tool used in serious crimes and gang-related criminal activities. There has been a noticeable increase in the use of high-powered weapons, high-powered weapons. It has led to a subsequent increase in multiple, multiple murders.

We had St. Lucia, 17 people were killed in one day last year. The Royal Grenada Police Force had to send officers from Grenada to assist our colleagues under the RSS in St. Lucia. This isn't... You know, there's a lot of comic relief that was taking place here this morning. This isn't a joke, Mr. Speaker. This is life and death. And when I weighed the reference to the fact that sometimes they are safer off... **(Sound of the time bell)**

Mr. Speaker, I think the rules do permit you the discretion to give Members an extra five minutes in those circumstances, seek... Seek your indulgence and your discretion for three out of the five minutes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Granted, Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** I'm sure the Speaker is fair, Honourable Member for the Town of St. George, and if you request five minutes, he will give you five. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** I've been doing so for a long time, but the fella isn't listening. **(Laughter)** He isn't listening at all, as you saw this morning, he isn't listening, but as they say, time will tell.

So, Mr. Speaker, the empirical data is there, and I want to read this: Furthermore, analysis of Firearms Purchasers' data highlights the increasing and deeply concerning tendency for Caribbean-born persons legally residing in the US to purchase firearms which are then shipped to and recovered in the Caribbean.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

Within the purchaser data on crime, guns traced and recovered, 14% of purchases were born in the Caribbean, denoting a burning relationship between Caribbean-born purchasers and crime guns recovered in the Caribbean, 61.3% of the firearms recovered in the purchaser's birth country and 38.7% recovered in a nearby Caribbean island.

What does that tell you? 38.7% recovered in a nearby Caribbean island. It means the guns would have been shipped to Grenada, and if they ship four or five, two are being found in St. Vincent, or two are being found in St. Lucia.

Let us not be naïve. We are not just dealing with an isolated case of a young man watching some movie or listening to music or being led astray, you have those isolated incidents, but we also have to appreciate that criminals within CARICOM are moving, they are trading and they're doing business just as legitimate business people, whether it is drug money, money laundering or murder for hire.

And I want to conclude on this point, Mr. Speaker, we've had to deport several CARICOM Nationals from Jamaica in the north to Trinidad in the south, to St. Vincent not so far who've entered this island and who have multiple, multiple in many instances convictions for shooting at the police in the case of Trinidad, murder charges multiple in Jamaica and Trinidad. So we have to understand that they call them shooters in Trinidad, "murder for hire", you pay them, and they kill you, just business. So I'm saying if we find such persons here...

Mr. Speaker, just recently, the police arrested a Vincentian National with firearms and drugs. He was fined EC\$30,000 or something like that, paid the EC\$30,000 on the spot and went to St. Vincent. Do you think he is going back to become a legitimate businessman? He's going to come. If the business is lucrative enough that he could find \$30,000 and pay it on the spot, he is going to come back.

So the point I'm making, Mr. Speaker, is that we have to take measures to, in fact, protect our citizens from persons who are commercialising criminality, who are commercialising the illicit trading and use of firearms. And if that means limiting or restricting their right to bail at the magistrate level, which this Parliament has the right to

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

do, we certainly, Mr. Speaker, unashamedly will do so. Defence counsel will have ample opportunity to make more money because they charge more fees when they go to the High Court to apply for bail.

So, my learned and erudite friend on the “Other Side”, I am actually helping you with this amendment to the legislation. I'm grateful, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much, Honourable Prime Minister, and now I invite the Honourable MP for the Town of St. George.

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker, the issue that arises in this piece of legislation and I raised the matter earlier, because I was accused of not reading. I read all the legislation.

This one, the Member for St. George South-East, indicated something that the Prime Minister has cleared up while not indicating he is clearing it up, and he did it in a much more sophisticated way, and I respect that because this does not seek to deny bail. It seeks to make bail more expensive for people who want to apply for bail. In other words, people with more money, as the Prime Minister just indicated, will find it much easier to get bail.

Because the fact is, the High Court is not known to be any stricter than the Magistrates Court with bail. In fact, among our fraternity, it is felt that the High Court grants bail, it is not that difficult because they... I don't know why it is, but it is not more difficult than the Magistrate's Court. I think both of them use the same criteria in granting bail.

But in any event, before I get there, I just want to make a point. Mr. Speaker, let it not be said anywhere that we on “This Side” are advocating “We do nothing about guns”. Let it not be said. I remember when I visited the State Department about 10 years ago I had a discussion with a Senior Member of the State Department and I said to her that we need to study why it is, and this is when we didn't have much gun crime, why it is that we are placed between Trinidad, St. Vincent, St Lucia and we have

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

minimal crime.

And I asked if a study could be undertaken as to why that is so, particularly, coming out of the Revolution, where guns were all over the place. The fact is, after the Revolution, all the guns were sold by people who adhered to this order... And it was a peculiar situation that we had. I have always said that we should undertake a study as to why. Why do we do that? Because if you don't understand why you have something, you can lose it because you don't know how to preserve it.

So, I have always advocated that we study why we have the kind of society we have. We had cutlasses... I mean, you know, I remember in 2005, 2003 that is the period when we had violence with the cutlass. I have a lot of clients who I see with one hand, because my dear friend before the Parliament this morning was in the court at the time, we saw it.

The issue is this. The issue is this. How do we deal with the problem? Now, the fact is that gun violence has increased, and we support... I, for example, the point I wanted to make, I, for example, and the police officers will tell you that, speak to any of them. I have said to my clients for years, not recently when it became "sexy and chic" to talk about gun violence, for years I have said to all my clients who have gun-related incidents where they're known to have a gun, give me the gun, I bring it in and I represent you for free. Ask the police officers, ask any of them they will tell you that. Why? Because I believe that we need to preserve the society that we have.

So don't let it be said that when I stand here, we or any of us are defending that. I have done that all my legal career. I do not believe there should be a proliferation of these guns, and we should do everything we can. When we said, when we had the amnesty, you remember my comments about the amnesty. I support the amnesty, but I believe we should provide more incentives to get more guns. That is our position. We support it in principle, but the reason why we have a debate in Parliament is to improve the legislation. We don't come here just to say yes, yes, yes, yes, yes to everything. We try to improve it, so we try to listen to each other.

I heard the Member for St. David, and there are lots of things that he said, and

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

you have done that I agree with, and I said that when I started, I agreed with it, but you see this disenfranchising of the Magistrates, I have an issue with it. Yes, I call it disenfranchising of the magistrate.

Let me say this, Mr. Speaker. The Member for St. David said that if the matter goes to the High Court, the High Court judges are serious and sober, and they listen to arguments. By saying that, the Member is saying that the Magistrates are not serious and not sober, and don't listen to arguments. It is suggestive of that... **(Inaudible comments by Members)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** I mean, I mean, Mr. Speaker, I think my learned friend knows that there is no way I would sit here and have him, clearly, mischaracterise what I have said.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, agreed.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** He knows what I said about the High Court. I did not say anything about the magistrates.

**Mr. Speaker:** I agree, Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** And I emphasise the magistrates are a Creature of Statute and that this Parliament has the right to curtail or to increase their jurisdiction, that's all I said. And that was being said in the context of what I know people would usually talk about, interference with the judiciary. And I made a clear distinction between the Supreme Court and the Magistracy. Parliament, if it wanted to, could in fact completely eradicate a magisterial district.

So any suggestion to impute improper motives to me in terms of the conduct,

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

capacity or character of magistrates is wholly rejected, and my friend should know better than that. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Agreed. I agree with the Prime Minister.

**Hon. Peter David:** With what part of it, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Speaker:** I agree with the Prime Minister on his statement of improper motive. Right. You do not say what the Prime Minister meant when he made his remark.

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Proceed.

**Hon. Peter David:** I am looking for the justification behind this. I'm looking... In listening to the presenter, he indicated that this was to deny the people bail. I'm not saying improper motive, but that is what he said, that the purpose of this legislation was to deny and take people off the streets. Now I grant that he may have aired, and the Prime Minister cleared it up that it's going to the High Court. But when I asked for clarification that is what I was asking. Is it that this seeking to deny people bail and that wasn't answered?

With respect to this, the magistrates, well, let me proceed. I was never implying motive, I simply said what was said. If I said to somebody I left that girl, and I said that girl is beautiful, obviously, somebody can infer that I left that one because that one wasn't very beautiful. It is we who infer from the comment what the thinking is. Now it is not improper for somebody to say that he believes that the High Court is more competent in dealing with it. There is nothing improper about that. It may be that this is their conclusion, having dealt with magistrates and judges. That's not an improper

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

motive. There is nothing about motive there, it is just an observation, and let me tell you why I say that, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm not here saying that we should be soft on guns. Please, watch your speeches. We should be tough on guns like I am with my clients. I have left clients in the prisons not applying for bail to keep them where they are while matters cool down, ask any magistrate, ask any attorney, because I have a state... Mr. Speaker, I have 10 grandchildren, six of them are boys, I worry about them every night, and they go to GBSS. GBSS is the school with the most problems. We see it in the court every day.

So I'm not speaking here as one who wants to see crime proliferate because somehow it benefits me. Most of my clients can't pay me, everybody knows that. I do it because I've always done it. Now... **(Inaudible comments by Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen)** Yes, I don't have many wealthy clients.

Mr. Speaker, magistrates are judicial officers. They are judicial officers. They give bail for rape. They give bail for dangerous harm. They give bail for death by dangerous driving. They give bail. Is rape less serious than gun crime? Are we saying to a woman that the abuse of their body is somehow less serious than a gun? I don't think we're trying to say that, but maybe that's what the women may hear. **(Inaudible comment by Hon. Dickon Mitchell)** Yes, I'm saying that because that's what they may hear. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** It is you who are saying that they could be allowed to grant bail for rape, but not for a gun that's not me saying that.

The point I am making is not that they should or should not do anything. We must have faith in our Magistrates. They are judicial officers who, for the most part, become judges. The Member for St. David quoted one case where bail was granted without giving the facts of the case. I don't know why the magistrate came to that decision.

Comments like that have a chilling effect on magistrates conducting their business wondering if the politicians would sit conducting them business wondering if the politicians will sit in Parliament and speak of them in a particular case. I've seen it. Because that magistrate referred to is hearing this, and she is saying, but I am not

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

allowed to defend myself. I'm not allowed to say why I granted bail. Maybe there was a child in the house that was locked up too... Maybe there was a woman who was locked up too... Maybe there was a mother who was locked up too and thought it fitting... I don't know what is in the magistrate's brain.

I simply say I was waiting for a justification for this Bill removing power from people who the Government gives power. It is you who appoint the magistrates. The magistrate, referred to by the Member for St. David, is appointed by the Government.

So, I agree with every step you take to calm down on guns. I hate guns, everybody, and all of my clients and all police officers will tell you that about my practice, give me your gun and I will represent you. I want it off the streets. Long before our amnesty. Long before our amnesty.

So, Mr. Speaker, I simply... And when I say magistrates are on the frontline and we are on the frontline... We go to court, we see those youths. The youth that the Member for St. David is speaking of, we know that sometimes they go to jail and stay in jail, denied bail for months. I've had a client who was denied bail, and I never asked for bail for months. Why? I knew that he needed to cool it. Ask all my clients, I talked to them about it, that is why we have the initiative with the Bar Association, because we understand these kids and magistrates.

You know, the other day I had what I considered an emotional experience. One of the magistrates begging me to beg the Government, not the Government, whoever it is, sorry to refer to the Government, whoever it is, can help with these kids. GBSS's Mr. Alexander. Mr. Alexander comes every juvenile day with these kids from GBSS. Jerry Edwin, I and others stayed in the court and represented them to help the magistrate, and the magistrate said, Mr. David, please... To the extent, the other day the magistrate said, "You know what, if you want bail, you have to agree to help the Bar Association with their initiative and talk to all the youths in the area where you live". That is the kind of thing to do.

So, when we stand, please, please, that's why I said this is both of us working together. Stop making it sound as if Members here don't want to fight crime. I am as

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

much a victim as you are. So to make this suggestion... You know, it's really regrettable.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Government, let's have faith in the players in the system, let's work with the Probation Officers and let's work with the Police Officers. There was a time when police officers were being criticised up and down the place, you know what I would do? I would call them on the phone and say, "Gentlemen, you're doing a good job".

I'm simply saying, you know, they can try and juke me up, I wouldn't respond. Mr. Speaker, I am talking to you, actually, we all need to find the solution together. That is why the crux of my presentation earlier was the absolute refusal of the Government, led by the Attorney General, to meet with the Bar Association to discuss their initiative. They wrote to you and said, absolute rebuffing of an initiative by a group of people who come into contact with the people you talk about every day? The Attorney General just wrote back a letter, "Listen, man, we're proceeding with this thing, and I wish you well with your programme". Nothing about let's talk, nothing about, you know, how can we help the programme, nothing like that. Simply saying, you do your thing, we have the power.

That is why I started by saying, Mr. Speaker, that you would pass the Bill. Now, if you can't take a criticism on the issue of consultation with the Bar Association of the country, the rebuff led by the Attorney General, then why am I speaking? Why am I speaking if you're not even willing to listen to that **(sound of the time bell)** when people are offering?

Mr. Speaker, I think I was lobbying for a few minutes earlier, three minutes? Can I have three more minutes?

**(Inaudible comment by Mr. Speaker)**

**Hon. Peter David:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. Is your light on?

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Mr. Speaker:** I didn't see your light.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** The Attorney General isn't in this Chamber and to frankly, in my humble view, misrepresent the position of the Attorney General is not something I am prepared to stand and go without challenging, Mr. Speaker.

And again, my friend seems to think the only way you consult is to meet. The Bar Association shared its view on the drafting and raised its concerns, and the Honourable Attorney General responded to its concerns. **(Applause)** So to come and give the impression... Consultation isn't an agreement, you know, Mr. Speaker. If I ask my...

**(Inaudible comments by Honourable Peter David)**

**Mr. Speaker:** No. Honourable, just hold. Let him proceed.

**(Inaudible comments by Honourable Peter David)**

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's the point.

**Mr. Speaker:** Go ahead.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** The learned Member is misrepresenting that the Attorney General refused to consult with the Grenada Bar Association, and that is not accurate. It is the Honourable Attorney General who, in fact, insisted that we delay coming to Parliament with the Bill to give it to the Bar Association so that they can provide their comments, and they did so, and she responded. It is not our obligation to agree with everything that certain Members of the Bar Association may say, particularly criminal defence attorneys.

So to stand here and to misrepresent that the Honourable Attorney General

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

rejected any consultations with the Bar Association is just false. All my friend has is the final letter of the consultation. You don't have to sit with the Bar Association in person to consult with them; you send them the draft, and they provide their feedback and comments. The fact that we don't agree with the comments, or we did not alter the legislation to suit your needs...

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker...

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** ... Is not a basis for saying that there has been no consultation and that she rejected consulting with them...

**Hon. Peter David:** ... Three minutes ...

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** ... And my friend knows that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker, I lost two full minutes there. If you looked at the clock, I lost two full minutes there. I stopped. When you rang the bell, it was 15 past.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable, don't argue with me about time, please.

**Hon. Peter David:** So I need five minutes, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable, Honourable leader, sorry Honourable MP for the Town of St. George, I am giving you two minutes. **(Laughter) (Applause)** Two minutes to finish. Two minutes.

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker, so I am not getting back the time?

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Mr. Speaker:** I am giving you two minutes to finish.

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker, you are being unfair, you know, but anyway, maybe that is imputing something too. Takes two minutes to give a speech, and I don't get it back.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, the letter from the Bar Association requests a meeting. The letter, which I will circulate, says, "Listen, we are proceeding". I am a Member of the Committee that deals with the issue of the rising crime and how we as attorneys... So, I am telling you not what somebody told me, I spoke to the leadership of the bar up to this morning, when my friend said that the Bar was on board, I immediately contacted them and asked, "Are you on board"? The answer was, well, we haven't been spoken to.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, I am simply saying this, in conclusion, I think this sends a bad message to the magistracy who are trying and working hard to deal with the problems as they have remanded people time and again. I can list you clients now who are in prison on remand in these cases. One case by a single magistrate, appointed by the Government, that the Government disagrees with, is not how we make policy. That is why it is important that we sit, we all sit. The members said that going to the High Court requires about EC\$3,000, and lawyers charge for it. I don't, but there's a cost to the court.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** But, you see again, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable PM.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** No, I have to object, Mr. Speaker. I said lawyers charge more for going to the High Court.

**Hon. Peter David:** Fine.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** That's not what you are saying. You're saying I said lawyers charge...

**Hon. Peter David:** Lawyers charge more.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** ...EC\$3,000

**Hon. Peter David:** No, no, no, I never said that.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** You just said that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** And unless you are suffering from dementia or something, you just said so.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Peter David:** You see, now you're accusing me. Mr. Speaker, he has to withdraw that statement!

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** I am not withdrawing the statement, and we can go to the Hansard.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Prime Minister. Honourable MP...

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** You just said...

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable MP...

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Hon. Peter David:** Accusing me of losing my memory because I said something that you didn't say.

**Mr. Speaker:** ...for the Town of St. George. Please resume your seat.

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker...

**(Mr. Speaker, Honourable Dickon Mitchell and Honourable Peter David were standing)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Please resume your seats, MPs.

**Hon. Peter David:** ... the Member has to be more... More... We're debating.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable MP for the Town of St. George please resume your seat.

**Hon. Peter David:** We're debating.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have asked the House earlier today to watch your words. I did, I did.

**(Inaudible comments by Honourable Peter David and Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen)**

**Mr. Speaker:** I have asked all Members of the House to watch their words. I want us to continue with the decorum and decency with which we began. In life... Life in general is not about how you start, it's about how you finish. Right. Honourable MP for the Town of St. George, I think you have seconds left.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker...

**Mr. Speaker:** Right?

**Hon. Peter David:** ... You allowed the Member to get up and accuse me of all kinds of things, and then you bite my time?

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, Honourable MP, listen ...

**Hon. Peter David:** Give me a minute, let me wind down.

**Mr. Speaker:** ... right, exactly what I am saying. I am giving you one minute.

**Hon. Peter David:** I'll take two, Mr. Speaker, on the basis of what he took.

**(Laughter)**

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker, this is a debate.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, now let's get serious, Honourable MP.

**Hon. Peter David:** I am serious.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am giving you one minute to wind up.

**Hon. Peter David:** Yes, so it goes to 21.

**Mr. Speaker:** Right.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker, I am simply saying this, now the Member is a distinguished Member of the Bar. This is what we're used to, this is what we do in court, we debate, but you don't disrespect, I don't disrespect, we disagree with language, so don't take it personally, it's what we do.

But, I am passionate about this because I do believe that the magistrates and all of us involved in this are as concerned about crime, even the magistrate who granted bail. So don't take away the power of the magistrate in a particular case and then come to Parliament, and in my view, suggest that the magistrates are not capable of dealing with these things. It is my view. It is my view that the suggestion was given that it is better to go to the High Court. The only difference in the High Court, Mr. Speaker, is that they charge more, and it takes about two weeks to get to them. So, in those two weeks, my clients have to accumulate EC\$2,500 or whatever money lawyers charge, as the Member said it's more expensive, in addition to that, while they're **(sound of the time bell)** waiting for a date, they're sitting in prison.

But let me say in conclusion. Fully. One sentence. We are on board with solving the problem of crime in general and in particular, solving the problem of gun crime **(applause)** because we have always stood by the Government, we've always stood by the people in that regard. As it pleases you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable MP for the Town of St. George. **(Laughter)** Leader of Government's... Sorry. Honourable MP for the constituency of St. Andrew South East.

**Hon. Emmalin Pierre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to add my thoughts on this Bill, my views on this, and I'm happy for the way that the presenter opened it up, so it gives me an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to address this in a holistic way.

Mr. Speaker, I want to join with my colleague and make this point that we on "This Side" would support any initiative, absolutely any initiative that seeks to seriously

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

address the issue of gun violence. There's been a significant increase, and so we would be rather insensitive not to want to support an initiative that is aimed at reducing gun violence in our country. So we've heard a lot of references to Trinidad and elsewhere, of course, we don't want to get there.

But, Mr. Speaker, while I'm saying this, let me make this point, that I cannot support this Bill under any condition. In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, what this Bill seeks to do, which is draconian in my opinion, is to take away the rights of ordinary citizens. So any measure that is going to help the situation, that respects the fundamental right of people, I'm for it, I'm going to support.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to one comment that was made, paraphrasing, it says, "When people commit a crime, they will not be allowed to walk on the streets, they will not be granted bail". Mr. Speaker, when somebody is accused of a crime, it is absolutely different to saying that person committed a crime. Why? A person is innocent until they are proven guilty, and so we cannot use "accused" interchangeably with "committed". And so, Mr. Speaker, listening to the presentations, listening to all that has been said, I have to say this. I absolutely cannot support this.

Mr. Speaker, reference was made to a person with five firearms, plus rounds of ammunition and I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, we cannot just pass or amend a law based on the circumstances presented, Mr. Speaker, and if we go directly to what this Bill is presenting, speaking about the magistrates and what they have the power to do, Mr. Speaker, I think they're quite capable of using their discretion when a matter comes before them as they have been doing.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we cannot remove that, deny them the opportunity to use their discretion and now we turn around and speak about how much it would cost a person to go to the High Court. Mr. Speaker, there are people who cannot put food on the table. Mr. Speaker, how could we now speak in glowing terms about them having to spend EC\$3,000 and whatever thousand to take a matter to the High Court?

**(Inaudible comments by Members)**

Mr. Speaker, what we may find is that that person is indeed innocent because a

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

person is innocent until proven guilty. So let's not have the decision here as to whether they're innocent or they're guilty. That's not our place, and that is why we have the court. Because I cannot sit here and decide you're wicked, you're an animal, you're no good, because you were found in possession of a firearm? No, Mr. Speaker, that is why we have the court; the court decides. And so, I cannot support that we treat every individual found with a firearm in the same way, and I'm saying, many of these people would not.

As a matter of fact, in that case, if you ask me, the denial of bail comes as a punishment. That is how I see it, Mr. Speaker. When you say that no one would be granted bail at the level of the Magistrate's Court, it means that these persons now have to spend some time before they come to the High Court. And so, Mr. Speaker, we have had situations, and you look... I've heard before that the prison doesn't have enough space, and we have to build a new prison. I'm asking the question, would we have sufficient space to accommodate these people, will it cost less to build a new prison or find alternative ways of treating with those matters?

Mr. Speaker, when we look at why bail is granted, Mr. Speaker, or why bail is denied, there is concern that this person is going to skip, they're going to leave the jurisdiction, for example. There is concern that that person may commit a similar crime. Right? Mr. Speaker, the same discretion that I spoke about earlier is what the magistrates used to decide. And so, Mr. Speaker, I cannot see for the want of me the justification for this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker... Mr. Speaker, data suggests **(laughter)**, Mr. Speaker, that makes it even more interesting to me. The data suggests that an increasing crime, Mr. Speaker, an increase in gun violence means that by denying people bail, you're going to reduce it. Mr. Speaker, let's go ahead and see what happens.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely concerned if there's a likelihood that a person is going to commit the crime or a similar crime in the opinion of the magistrate, Mr. Speaker. By all means, discretion is used and a decision is taken. But we cannot say across the board it is okay that for every single person who comes, no bail is granted or

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

no consideration for bail. I believe, as my colleague said earlier, Mr. Speaker, that our magistrates are quite competent, quite competent to use their discretion to make necessary decisions.

So, what is normally done, Mr. Speaker? People are granted bail, and they are asked to report daily. I know of cases where people are under curfew, you can't leave **(laughter)** a particular place, you can go to a particular place, people normally have to put up cash up front, right, and people are asked over and over to surrender their travel documents. So, this is my suggestion, Mr. Speaker. Let us review those, see how we can tighten it, maybe expand the curfew, let us see how we can increase the cash and let us do something that doesn't say every single person is denied their fundamental human right, constitutional right. Innocent until proven guilty.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, that approach to me speaks of punishment and pre-trial, and the system ought not to be reduced to that where ordinary citizens, Mr. Speaker, their rights are trampled upon in that way. So, when we speak about the High Court, let us remember that there are many citizens who do not have the resources to go to the High Court to determine whether they can get bail or not.

Let us also remember that even if an ordinary citizen has EC\$3,000, a single mother would we want a situation where we are dictating that that person use that EC\$3,000 so that a son gets an opportunity to be heard at the High Court level?

Mr. Speaker, I strongly suggest that this piece of legislation, this Bill that is before us, before it becomes accepted in the "Next Place" or discussed in the "Next Place", Mr. Speaker, we would review and give further consideration because this is not in the best interest of the democracy that we always speak about. I thank you. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for St. Andrew South East. Leader... Your light is still on, Honourable. All right. Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Bill that we are discussing is one that seeks to amend the criminal code to prohibit a magistrate

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

from admitting to bail any person charged with an offence under the Firearms Act to make it... Yes, and who is charged and who is punishable by imprisonment for a term of five years or more. Mr. Speaker, this is about public safety. This is what we're trying to do—to secure a safe environment for all of us to co-exist.

So we've heard this morning, Mr. Speaker, about trampling upon the rights of people after they have committed their crimes, after they have been caught with a firearm, and so charged. Yes? After they have been so charged and brought to the court, with a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term of five years or more, under the Firearms Act. We are saying, Mr. Speaker, or it is being said, Mr. Speaker, that by so amending the criminal code to prohibit a magistrate from admitting to bail such a person, that is trampling upon the rights of people. That is what we're being told today.

Mr. Speaker, we are also told that people cannot afford to buy food. You cannot afford to buy food, but you could afford to buy guns. You could afford to have guns. You could afford to have ammunition. As far as we've learned, Mr. Speaker, these things are not cheap. They're more expensive—much more expensive than food. And I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, many of these people are not unemployed, you know, and when they are arrested, most of the time, most of the time they pay the fines on the spot. And a lot of the time, they're arrested with their firearms, drugs, ammunition and money—thousands of thousands of dollars. And the street value of the substances that some of them are caught with is valued, on many occasions, hundreds of thousands of dollars.

So, Mr. Speaker, those who want to ply a trade of illegal drugs and illegal weapons, we are amending the Criminal Code. This is what we are discussing here, the amendment of the Criminal Code to prohibit a magistrate from granting bail to people who have been so charged, and is punishable by imprisonment for more than five years, so that person should not be granted bail. If they have to get bail, Mr. Speaker, they can apply to the High Court, and the High Court would make its determination at that level.

But, Mr. Speaker, we cannot lose our focus. This focus, this Bill, is not about

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

championing the cause of people who break the law. That is not what we're trying to do. We're trying to protect the majority of citizens. **(Applause)** In recent past weeks, people were afraid to traverse the Grand Anse road at night, and restaurants, bars, and shops were closed. People were afraid to ... From the time it turned night, people were afraid, Mr. Speaker, to leave their homes. People were imprisoned, self-imprisonment at the turn of night.

So, Mr. Speaker, let us not be fooled. Today is a day, Mr. Speaker, of history-making in Grenada. We should declare, publicly, whether or not we support this amendment. It is this critical, Mr. Speaker, and our constituents, the people who voted for us to send us to this Parliament, to take copious notes of our remarks and of our vote, because it is that critical. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, if we are not careful, if we are not diligent, if we're not responsible, this country will degenerate into a place where a few people will hold the rest of the country ransom and we would no longer be able to boast of a tourist destination, we'll no longer be able to boast about our pride of safety and security. Grenada, Mr. Speaker, is known across the globe for its safety, apart from its lovely beaches, apart from beautiful waterfalls, apart from its lovely people. The safety of our nation, Mr. Speaker, is like a currency that draws people to this country.

And with this, Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to the Members of this Honourable House for a stirring debate. And I want to say to the Grenadian people to listen up this morning and pay attention as we take a vote on this Bill today, and hold us accountable for the decisions that we take. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider this Bill Clause by Clause. Thank you.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**House in Committee.**

**House resumes.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Members, I have to report that Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment. Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Chairman's Report adopted.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

**Question proposed.**

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I beg to move a division. Mr. Speaker, this is an important matter. We are grappling with a matter of significant public importance, and I think for posterity we ought to know the position of each Member on this Bill. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** All right, the Clerk would lead in this regard. We will take the vote by division. Yes.

<b>Clerk:</b> Honourable Dickon Mitchell	– Aye
Honourable Philip Telesford	– Aye
Honourable Lennox Andrews	– Aye
Honourable Tevin Andrews	– Aye
Honourable Dennis Cornwall	– Aye
Honourable Kerryne James	– Aye
Honourable Ron Redhead	– Aye
Honourable Delma Thomas	– Aye
Honourable Andy Williams	– Aye
Honourable Emmalin Pierre	– No
Honourable Peter David	– <b>(Did not respond)</b>
Honourable Clarice Modeste-Curwen	– Abstain

**(The Clerk converses with the Speaker privately)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Members, the vote was taken by division. We've had nine ayes, one no and what I would gather as two abstentions. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** What I would gather as two. **(Applause)**

**Bill read a third time and passed.**

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024  
Bills: Passports (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2024

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to introduce for its first reading, a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled Passports (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

**Clerk:** A Bill which seeks to amend the Passports Act, Chapter 226 to change the validity period of passports issued on or after the commencement date, shortly entitled Passports (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Mr. Speaker, I also move that the relevant Standing Order be set aside to allow this Bill to go through all the stages at this Sitting. Thank you.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Relevant Standing Order suspended.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Mr. Speaker, the presenter for this Bill shall be the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Passports (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thanks.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

**Question proposed.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a very short Bill. Mr. Speaker, you would recall as part of the presentation by the Honourable Minister for Finance, when the Budget Presentation was made and the respective Appropriation Bills enacted, having listened to the people of this country, that we committed to reverting the policy enacted that limited the life of a passport for an adult citizen to that of five years.

And so, this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is a simple amendment to the existing legislation to substitute the word five where it appears in section 6 of the Act, 6A, to substitute five with 10 years for any adult 18 and over. So it means that our passports, once this Bill is enacted, would, from the 1st of July, which we hope to be the effective date, it would allow our citizens, when they apply for a new passport, or when they renew their old passport, to have a 10-year passport issued.

Mr. Speaker, from the time we assumed office, at our village meetings, at our town halls, queries at the Passport Office citizens have complained, understandably so, about the fact that our passport had a shorter lifespan than the average passports throughout most of the OECS, CARICOM countries and in fact the international community. And so, we are a Government of, for and by the people (**applause**), and we respond to the needs of our citizens. And so, Mr. Speaker, the policy that we are

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Passports (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

seeking to change through the enactment of this legislation is, in fact, to allow for citizens who are 18 and older to have a 10-year passport.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, many of our many of us citizens travel. And in particular, we have an extensive diaspora in North America, including Canada, and they are required to get visas. The visa process is expensive. It requires them to often times travel to neighbouring islands. Their biometrics have to be taken, hotels have to be paid for, and plane tickets have to be paid for. In the case of Canada, for example, Mr. Speaker, they do not issue you with a visa beyond the lifespan of your passport.

So, for example, I renewed my passport in 2020, in the height of COVID-19. It's a five-year passport, which means it will expire next year. Before you blink, it will expire. If I had to get a Canadian visa, they would only give you one up to the duration, which means when you renew your passport, you have to go and do this entire process again.

So we are seeking to bring some cost benefit to all citizens, by ensuring that they can have a 10-year passport that allows for them to obtain visas, in the case of the US and Canada, in particular, that lasts for the duration of the passport, which is 10 years. Oftentimes in cases where the passports are expiring quickly, you have an American visa, which is 10 years, but you have a passport that is five years. So when you renew the passport, you have the old passport and you have to staple two of them together and walk around with it, to prove that you have the visa. So again, it's simple, but it has significant importance to our citizens who are impacted by this.

Mr. Speaker, we will keep the five year duration for persons who are not yet of adult age, partly because you recognise if you get a passport when you a baby who's six months, by the time the child is five years old, their features would have changed dramatically, and similarly, between five and 10, 10 and 15, you would have pretty dramatic changes in physical appearance. And so, we will keep the five-year duration for minors who would require their parents' consent to apply for a visa.

Mr. Speaker, we are also going to be required, assuming the amendment is passed in both Houses, to amend the regulations for passport fees. Mr. Speaker,

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Passports (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

naturally, because we are moving from a five-year duration to a 10-year duration, there is an increase in the fee, but the increase in the fee is really minimal. We are moving from EC\$250 to EC\$350. So, your passport for five years, which costs EC\$250, will now cost EC\$350. So again, you can see that there is some cost savings there for passport holders. We are not doubling the fee, notwithstanding that the duration of the passport is being doubled.

So, Mr. Speaker, that in a nutshell is the reason for the amendment. I would obviously commend it to the Members of the House, because even last night at the town hall in St. George North East, a citizen brought to our attention and insisted, and wants to know when the 10-year passport was going to be implemented. And we were happy to tell him that we were coming to Parliament today, to honour our commitment to the citizens of Grenada, to in fact amend the legislation, to permit this to happen.

If we didn't have to come with the legislation, it would have been an easy policy decision to enact. But obviously, the duration is fixed by law, and we have to do the necessary amendment. We hope that by doing so, we will go back to that tradition and it will remain, and there will be no need for further reductions in the time that the average passport is issued for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister. Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just rise to offer my support to this Bill. I believe it's a very important Bill, because we've had a lot of complaints about the short period for passports. I think this is a step in the right direction, and I just want to offer my support to this Bill. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker.** Thank you, Leader of Government's Business. MP for St. Patrick East.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Passports (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

**Hon. Dennis Cornwall:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to declare that I fully support this Amendment. And to ensure that all Grenadians above the age of 18 benefit from our 10-year period passport at a reduced cost, I would say. And to also enable most of the person who are willing to travel abroad or elsewhere, will be able to benefit from a visa on their passport. I would not want to prolong this issue, so I'll end right here and hope that Members support the Bill. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for St. Patrick East. Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House, to consider the Bill Clause by Clause.

**Mr. Speaker:** Not there yet.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Not yet? Well...

**Mr. Speaker:** Just comment.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I didn't think there was anything further to say, other than to thank Members for their support. I was hoping that you'd say the Bill be read a second time. **(Laughter)** Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** All right.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Passports (Amendment) Bill, 2024

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Passports (Amendment) Bill, 2024  
Adjournment***

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House resolves itself into a Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause. Thank you.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**House in Committee**

**House resumes**

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Members, I have to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment. Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Chairman's Report adopted.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a third time and passed.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Passports (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

**Mr. Speaker:** Proceed.

**Deputy Clerk:** Item 16 – Request for leave to move the adjournment of the

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
Held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
At Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

House on matters of urgent public importance.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House be adjourned *sine die*.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Sitting of the House of Representatives adjourned *sine die* at 1:43 p.m.**

**PREPARED BY**

**HANSARD REPORTERS**

Ms. Shanta Joseph

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